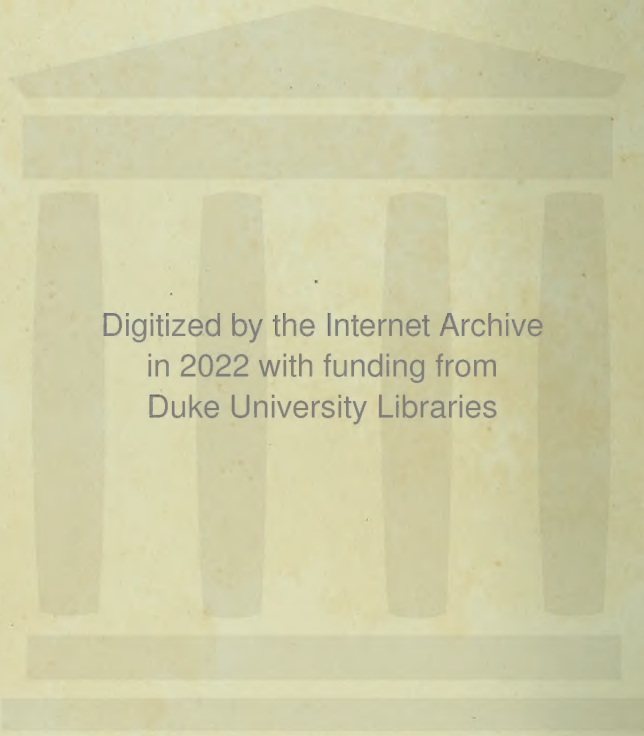




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THE LIFE

OF

REV. FERGUS FERGUSON, M.A., D.D.



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THE LIFE
OF THE
REV. FERGUS FERGUSON
M.A., D.D.

*MINISTER OF MONTROSE STREET EVANGELICAL UNION
CHURCH*

BY
WILLIAM ADAMSON, D.D.

With Illustrations

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To the
REV. WILLIAM ARNOTT
A BROTHER BELOVED
WITHOUT WHOSE INITIATIVE AND ENCOURAGEMENT
THIS VOLUME
WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED

ILLUSTRATIONS

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PREFACE.

THE following pages have been written at the request of friends, and by the sanction of the near relatives of the Rev. Dr. Fergus Ferguson. The work from beginning to end, and by all who have assisted, has been one of love, the design being to set before the reader one whose chief desire throughout life was to obey his Divine Master, and render service to those for whom He died.

The task has not been an easy one, for the life portrayed was many-sided, made up largely of deeds which belonged to semi-private life and the routine duties of a city pastor. Besides, from the fact that Dr. Ferguson kept no diary, not even a note-book containing a record of his numerous engagements, public deeds, and appearances, the preparation of his life was more difficult than it otherwise would have been. Neither did he leave important correspondence. I had, therefore, to avail myself of the many autobiographical statements he made in his numerous published works and his addresses, of the testimony of those who knew him intimately, and personal knowledge. From these sources the material of the

biography has been drawn, and it will not, I trust, be the less but more interesting on that account.

It may be said that the biography contains a history of the crisis which occurred in the Congregational Union of Scotland in 1843. The controversies of that period are now passed, and as Dr. Ferguson's public life began with their beginning, it closed when the breaches made in the Scottish Congregational Zion were healed and a practical union consummated.

I cordially thank all those who have so willingly assisted in this undertaking, whose names are mentioned where their contributions are placed, and especially the Rev. William Arnott and those who along with him have undertaken the responsibility of the publication.

The volume was written as a stone added to the cairn erected to the memory of a valued friend and beloved brother, and is published for the glory of Jesus Christ, whose kingdom he sought to advance during his long and faithful career.

WILLIAM ADAMSON.

WINDERMERE, Christmas, 1899.

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THE LIFE OF

REV. FERGUS FERGUSON, D.D.

CHAPTER I.

His name—Father—Auchterarder—Removal to Glasgow—Education—Religious position—Dr. Chalmers—Congregationalism—Marriage—Fergus' birth—Removal to Hamilton—At Grammar School—Congregational Church—Dr. Livingstone—Small churches.

“I am a Hebrew of the Hebrews,” was an expression which was frequently used by the subject of our memoir when speaking of the name he bore. His father's name was Fergus Ferguson, and he was called after him. The father was descended from the Perthshire branch of the large family of Fergusons, and was born on January 29th, 1799, in Auchterarder, a small town distinguished among other things for its long street, its connection with ecclesiastical disputes, and its quiet and thoughtful inhabitants. At the beginning of the century and for some years afterwards, its main trade was that of weaving, and those employed on the loom were always alive to questions of an ecclesiastical, doctrinal, and political

character. This class, as also others, were benefited by the education they received from the tuition given in the Parish School, an institution which has done more for Scotland in many ways than superficial readers of Scottish history understand. The Parish School was the common ground on which the children of all classes met on terms of equality. The laird's sons and daughters would, along with the manse family, attend the school, and at their sides, on the same bench, would sit the offspring of the shopkeeper, the farmer, the weaver, and the labourer. To a school, governed by these democratic principles, the young Fergus was sent, and received the initial part of his education. He was not allowed to remain long at its classes, for, when he was eight years of age his father died; and the widowed mother and her children, six in number, removed to Glasgow, where they were taken under the care of her brother, who, being unmarried, became a father to the fatherless and a help to the widow. It was under his direction that the young lad received the education which fitted him for commercial life. He attended the day school with regularity, and afterwards prosecuted his studies with assiduity at an evening class. As a self-reliant youth he was determined to equip himself for the battle of life, and to assist rather than be a burden to his uncle and his mother. By dint of application and attention he pushed his way until he reached a respectable position in business and got his foot firmly placed on the ladder which led to success.

Business and mental culture did not, however, occupy all his attention, and of recreation, as now generally understood by young men, he knew nothing. The religious side of his nature was cultivated; he delighted in the services of the sanctuary, in studying religious books, and in teaching in the Sabbath school. Dr. Chalmers had come to the Tron Church, Glasgow, and had by his marvellous eloquence, his evangelical doctrine, and especially by his astronomical discourses, attracted public attention. Young Ferguson soon afterwards became a member of his church, and a teacher in a Sabbath school, located in the Saltmarket, established by Mr. David Stow, a name well known as that of a devoted educationalist. When attending Chalmers, he was greatly moved in spirit and led to take a still deeper interest in personal and practical religion.

When twenty years of age, an incident occurred which influenced his after life and inclined him towards Congregationalism, whose adherents contended for purity of church communion, and that no person should be a member of a Christian church who had not been born of the Spirit. As the custom was, he had to receive a token for admission to the Lord's table at the yearly communion season; and as the elder to whom he went for it attempted to read the letter which Dr. Chalmers had given Mr. Ferguson, he swore roundly at the very illegible handwriting that was well known to be one of the eloquent Chalmers' defects. This distressed the young Sabbath school teacher, who thought a church which

admitted to its highest ruling office, a person who could use such profane language on Saturday and bear the vessels of the Lord on the Sabbath, was not one which was either spiritual or calculated to promote practical piety.

Another influence was brought to bear upon Mr. Ferguson to induce him to leave the Established Church and identify himself with the Independents. About 1820 he became acquainted with Miss Elizabeth Angus, a member of the Congregational Church presided over by the Rev. Dr. Ralph Wardlaw. She had profound admiration for her pastor and firm faith in his doctrines (which were a modification of those generally taught in Presbyterian churches) and in his church polity. The friendship between her and Mr. Ferguson ripened into a deeper feeling, and she became his wife when he was twenty-one years of age.

His son in the sketch of his father says: "Their ante-nuptial contract in so far as church attendance was concerned, was to this effect, that they would have seats in both churches; that they would attend in the forenoon in one place and in the afternoon in the other; and that as the one was a member with Chalmers and the other with Wardlaw, they would neither of them make any change but take the communion separately. This state of things was not likely to continue, and my father's mind had already been unsettled on the subject of purity of communion especially, and as he moreover began to be not a little drawn towards the polished and cultured, though

quiet eloquence of Dr. Wardlaw, it was not difficult to persuade him in about a year after his marriage to leave the Presbyterian communion and seek fellowship with the Congregational." This was a step which had a marked influence on his own life and that of his household. Environments of this nature exercise a power in shaping the outer if they do not determine the inner life.

Mr. Ferguson and his wife took up their abode in Clyde Terrace after their marriage, and it was here that their son Fergus was born, on the 6th September, 1824. He embodied some of the characteristics of both parents, more of the mother perhaps than of the father, who was an active business man, firm to sternness, just, and determined. The position where he would have excelled would have been at the head of an army. He was born to command; and his tall erect figure, keen eye, and firm mouth would have made those under him feel that theirs was to obey and his to give orders. These natural traits were modified by his religious experience, which made him, in after days, when he preached the gospel, solemn and awe-inspiring. The mother, on the other hand, was quiet, serious, and easily affected, and, by reason of the bodily weakness she now and again experienced, excitable. Both parents were in their own way and after their own style imbued with the Christian spirit, and the atmosphere of the home was of a kind calculated to tell on their son Fergus as he increased in years.

Owing to the health of the mother giving way,

the family removed from South Wellington Street to Rosebank Cottage, Burnbank, near Hamilton, when Fergus was four years of age. The change was gratifying to his childish mind, as changes generally are to young people, and in after years he delighted to relate his reminiscences of the journey, taken in a gig which he shared with part of the eight-day clock.

Hamilton soon became to the young boy a place of deepest interest, an interest he never lost. Its streets, not so many as now, its churches, its palace with the gardens and policies, and its Duke, who was spoken of as if he were more than human, had his attention. All the places of note were soon examined, and every neuk and corner looked into with prying curiosity. From his earliest years he delighted in seeing places, and he never forgot what he saw; and as Hamilton was more easily inspected in detail than Glasgow, he found pleasure in mastering all its outstanding objects and features. With his brother David, who was of a more daring disposition than Fergus, he joined in the fun and frolic of boyhood, and to the annoyance of the gardener had many escapades in the garden during the fruit season. David, by his impulsiveness, frequently got into difficulties, while Fergus, possessing a quiet, pawky humour, had the knack of escaping the parental rod. This vein of humour was a part of his nature and sent forth its jets of fun all along the journey of life.

At an early age Fergus was sent to the Grammar School taught by Mr. George Shaw, who, though an

ordained minister, used to be called by his pupils "Geordie." No sooner did he enter the doors of the institution than he determined to be the dux of his class. Though a modest and retiring lad, he was fired with the ambition of being in the front rank, and this characteristic never left him. His desire to excel led him to avoid taking things too easily and allowing opportunities to pass by unimproved. Mr. Shaw, seeing his pupil anxious to acquire knowledge, soon became interested in the success of Fergus, and encouraged him in his studies. In all his classes he reached the desired position and stood at, or near the head, and was rewarded with several of the Duke's Prizes, which were presented to him by the factor of the estate, bearing the inscription, "From His Grace the Duke of Hamilton to Master Fergus Ferguson." He also received beautifully bound volumes from the Magistrates of Hamilton "for excelling in French, Arithmetic, and Geography." These prizes, along with others, were placed in a select part of his library, and were frequently pointed out to visitors, and doubtless cheered the heart of the recipient when boyish days and delights were things of the past, bringing back to the possessor the emotions and the successes of youthful emulation.

When Mr. Ferguson, sen., and his family removed to Rosebank Cottage it could hardly be said that there was a Congregational church in Hamilton. A few brethren, who were called "Missioners," met together in a small meeting-house which still

exists in Blackwells. Their church, which was then composed of twenty people, had been founded by the Haldanes, had not prospered greatly, and could not afford to have a stated pastor of its own. The Rev. Mr. Alexander, a pious and devoted preacher and pastor, who resided in Larkhall, and ministered to a flock in that village, took them under his care and visited them every alternate Sabbath. These were the days of small things for Congregationalism, in the capital of Mid-Lanark, which was at such a low ebb, and the conditions so altogether depressing, that Mr. Ferguson, sen., hesitated for a time as to whether he would become identified with the struggling Missioners or join the Presbyterian Church under the care of the Rev. Thomas Struthers. After prayerfully considering the whole matter, he came to the conclusion that he and his household were bound in conscience to cast in their lot with the feeble folk who were contending for purity of communion, freedom from stereotyped creeds, and external ecclesiastical authority. This encouraged the faithful few, and in 1834, the Rev. John Moir was called and accepted the invitation to become their pastor.

A new spirit took possession of the little brotherhood by the advent of Mr. Moir. Like the early Church after Pentecost, they were drawn together in a remarkable manner, became like a family, knowing each other intimately and entering into each other's joys and sorrows, thus bearing each others burdens and fulfilling the law of Christ. Mr. Ferguson became

a deacon, and taught a Bible class which was attended by his own sons and, among others, by David Livingstone. It was under Mr. Moir's ministry that the renowned missionary received his first religious impressions, and it is also most likely that through the interest taken by the Church in the missionary enterprise, and the impetus he received when studying the Acts of the Apostles in the Bible class, David Livingstone was led to place himself on the altar of missionary service, and do all he could to fit himself for the self-sacrificing life. In this endeavour he was encouraged by his excellent father, Neil Livingstone, who was a Nathanael without guile, a member, along with his wife, of the little Christian community.

Writing of those days, Dr. Ferguson says, "I think I see the parents and the sisters and the brothers of the renowned traveller and the great traveller himself, then an unpretending lad, slip into their seat in that little meeting-house that would not hold two hundred people when crowded to the door. I think I see them meeting with us for a very humble refreshment at the interval of worship in a school-room in Patrick Street, Hamilton, and I think I feel the pressure of the great traveller's hand as I would walk home with mine in his at the dismissal of the little company in the afternoon."

Those scenes were often thought and spoken about by Fergus Ferguson, jun. They reveal the Christian love which filled the hearts of the "Missioners," old and young, in the days when they sought by every

means to advance the Kingdom of God; and also that no church can be called small and unimportant because it does not possess hundreds of names on the fellowship roll, an imposing service, and a grand building in which to worship. No church could be called insignificant that had in its Bible class two such young men as David Livingstone, the missionary and explorer of Africa, and Fergus Ferguson, the able, popular preacher, and learned divine.

CHAPTER II.

1832-1842.

University—Professors—Prizes—Degree B.A.—Theological Academy—Home influence—Boy theologians—Father as evangelist—Boy preacher—Opposition—Its effect.

FERGUS FERGUSON made such progress in all departments of knowledge at the Grammar School that he was pronounced by the head master, Mr. Shaw, fit to enter the Glasgow University. At that time he was fourteen years of age; young enough to be sent to this ancient seat of learning, but eager to enter its halls. The Old College in the High Street was a most unpretentious building with its dull class-rooms and small quadrangle. All along its history, from its foundation somewhere about 1451, it had held, as a historian says, "a most dignified and respectable position amongst the educational institutions of the kingdom. Many of the most famous men in the empire have either been principals or professors of this University, or had received their education within its ancient walls." The roll of its alumni contains the names of scholars, philosophers, scientists, statesmen, divines, poets, and literati which the world will

not let die. To attend such a seat of learning was the ambition of most thoughtful and intelligent Scotch boys in the western part of Scotland, and this feeling had a large place in the heart of the Hamilton Grammar School youth.

It was with no common emotion that he became a student and matriculated as a member of the junior Greek and Latin classes in the autumn of 1838, and donned the scarlet toga which students in those days wore. The teachers of the University were at that period men of distinct characteristics and generally speaking of marked ability. The head of the University was the venerable Principal M'Farlane, who took a most fatherly interest in the students. The Latin chair was filled by Professor William Ramsay, who was deeply versed in the Roman tongue and in all things pertaining to Roman history, antiquities, and literature. Professor E. S. Lushington, brother-in-law to Tennyson, occupied the Greek chair, an amiable gentleman, a ripe scholar, and a successful teacher of those who were far enough advanced in their education to understand the niceties of the flexible language of Homer and Plato. The Logic class was conducted by Professor Buchanan, "Logic Bob," as he was familiarly named, whose lectures laid the basis of what might by persevering young men become a sound method of thinking. Professor Fleming taught Moral Philosophy in a clear and lucid manner, giving the students, according to the Scotch fashion, a system of philosophy and not merely lectures in which he criticised the various ethical

systems which had gained the ear of those interested in such subjects. Two other chairs were filled by Professor Blackburn, who taught mathematics, and the world-renowned Professor William Thomson, now Lord Kelvin, who conducted the class of Natural Philosophy. Through all these classes young Ferguson passed with credit and in many of them he excelled. Some of his fellow-students were of more than ordinary capacity and attainments—the late Principal John Caird and Principal Douglas, Free Church College, Glasgow, being two of them—but he held his own with them all. He excelled in Latin and Greek and obtained prizes in both the junior and middle classes, in addition to those in Logic and Moral Philosophy.

During his six sessions he secured eleven honours, which speak not only of his progress and efficiency in learning, but likewise of the high estimation in which he was held by his class-mates. At that time the Professors did not determine who were to receive prizes and honours; they were voted by the members of the classes—a system which had its drawbacks doubtless but its advantages also. On the whole it injured no one deserving of commendation, and allowed the members of the class to manifest their judgment regarding those who assumed airs and forgot that all stood on the same level within the gates of the venerable building and should act as gentlemen towards each other. Fergus was not likely to offend in this respect, for he was gentle, obliging, studious, and much esteemed by his teachers and associates.

At the end of the session of 1844-45 Ferguson took the degree of Bachelor of Arts, a degree much coveted at that time. He used to tell how he felt as he was capped and what Principal M'Farlane said to Mr. Brewin Grant who kneeled beside him. Fergus was in a solemn and prayerful mood at that moment, but this state of mind was dissipated when he heard the Rev. Principal say to his companion, who was only on one knee, "Down on your knees, sir," adding, "One knee to your Queen but two to your Maker, Mr. Grant; down on both knees." This changed his feelings for the instant, but did not destroy his sense of pleasure that for a season he had to leave his Alma Mater and turn his face to the work to which he had dedicated himself, the work of the Christian ministry.

It was when young Ferguson attended the University that he became a student of the Glasgow Theological Academy, then presided over by the erudite Rev. Dr. Ralph Wardlaw. The Academy was the training school for the ministers of the Congregational Churches of Scotland, to whose ministry Ferguson aspired. Its sessions were so arranged that he could attend the classes of both the University and the Academy during the same year, and thus his general and theological education ran almost contemporaneously. He was the youngest member of the class, and was, among his fellows, as the beloved disciple John was among the apostles. There can be little doubt but that he was too young to enter the arena of theological controversy and

the study of the deep problems of the "queen of the sciences," and was better fitted for mastering Latin, Greek, and other languages. But in some respects he was a precocious youth so far as religious matters were concerned, and was not altogether unprepared to sit at the feet of his teacher when he discoursed on sacred themes.

Rosebank Cottage had been the home of preachers and theologians. It had "a prophet's chamber" which was seldom empty, and no guests were more welcome under the family roof-tree than those who were employed in the work of preaching the Gospel and could speak with interest and intelligence of the ways of God to man and the things pertaining to the spiritual world. Mr. Ferguson who had retired from business, though in his prime, had become an earnest theologian and spent much of his time in reading the works of Finney, Dwight, and Independent writers, and was, as his son tells us, "doing a little in the way of the investigation of the original Greek text of the New Testament." Theological subjects were the most attractive of all themes in the family circle. Even the servants were animated with the prevailing sentiment, and this could be specially said of one who was both a servant and a brother in Christ to the elder Ferguson. "My father," said his son, when recalling his youthful experiences, "had a very intelligent gardener, also a member of the Congregational band in Hamilton. His tastes came out in this way, that during his dinner hour, from two till three o'clock, he generally

read the theological works which were in my father's library. I have still a vivid recollection of our servant maid saying, 'Arthur would like another volume of Dwight's Theology if agreeable.' He thoroughly mastered that work and besides was deeply interested in the controversy which was then being waged on the work of the Holy Spirit. Unlike the gardener whom Mary feared had taken away her Lord, and concealed the place where He had been laid, he delighted in the doctrines which, as many believed, had brought to light again a lost and hidden Redeemer."

This description of the theological gardener is, in substance, the picture of many working men and peasants in the country of Knox, who have added not a little to the moral fibre and intellectual strength of the nation. Fifty or sixty years ago, and previously, many a thoughtful youth was bound to be a theologian whether he would or not. At school he received, frequently to his sorrow, the hard nutriment of a doctrinal kind supplied by the Shorter Catechism with proofs. Nor were the questions and answers of that venerable and marvellous production altogether beyond the apprehension of the pupils. They set them thinking about God, His purposes and relations, the soul, death and judgment, and it was no uncommon thing for boys of twelve or fourteen years of age to gather into groups, and discuss such abstruse themes as foreknowledge, election, reprobation, and original sin. These questions were frequently considered by them in after days, in weavers', shoemakers',

and other shops, in the fields and in gardens, hot contentions taking place regarding them. More particularly was this the case when the Rosebank Cottage gardener pored over the polished lectures of Dwight, and the youthful student entered into discussions with his father and others as to the truthfulness of prevailing views of the relation of God and Christ to the salvation of the world.

The young student was also led to take a growing interest in the studies of the Theological Academy by the practical religious work he became engaged in, in conjunction with his father. Mr. Ferguson, senior, took an active part in public work, being a member of the Town Council, a leader of the Radical section of the Liberal party of the place, and an advocate of Voluntaryism and of Temperance. His success as a public speaker, when advocating these causes, led him to entertain the idea of devoting himself entirely to Christian work. Others could attend to semi-secular matters with as much efficiency as himself, while there were few who devoted themselves to making known to the careless and wayward, in the densely populated mining district, the glad tidings of the Gospel.

The miners of the numerous villages in Mid-Lanark were in the spiritual condition when it could be said, "no man careth for our souls." Mr. Ferguson, as if by heaven, was called into this field ripe unto harvest, and started his career as an evangelist one Sabbath evening by preaching a sermon to the miners who went to no church, in a village called Quarter.

He visited this and other places, destitute of means of grace, regularly for two years, great blessing attending the services, while his fame as a powerful preacher began to spread through the neighbourhood. Some remarkable conversions took place under his preaching—men known to be wild, intractable, a terror to their families and the neighbourhood, became like lambs; homes were changed, children were clothed, fed, and educated who had hitherto been neglected; and those who had blasphemed and been the devotees of Bacchus, prayed and lived sober, righteous, and godly lives. A great awakening was experienced, and Mr. Ferguson and his “Gospel Chariot” soon became known throughout the whole district.

In all these works of faith and labours of love the father was assisted by his son Fergus. The latter was called “the boy preacher,” not being at that time nineteen years of age. In 1843 he conducted, without assistance, a series of revival meetings at Shotts Iron Works, which was followed up by others and issued in the formation of the church which exists till the present day.

The Rev. David Hislop, B.A., writing of these meetings, says—“I shall never forget sitting in a corner of James Russell’s barn at Shotts, with lads of my own age, to hear my mother’s two favourite preachers, whom she spoke of to me as young Mr. Morison and young Mr. Ferguson. I was but a stripling of eleven or twelve years, but the faces and the words of the two youthful preachers abide with me till this day.

“It was a time of deep spiritual interest among young and old. We felt as if a new world was beginning, and as if the way of salvation and the love of God had never been understood till then. The Bible was a new book to us all, and this world and heaven were closer and more real, and to some of us there never were such preachers as young Morison and Ferguson and Bathgate,—the last named, the first minister at Stane, as the Shotts village was then called. My mother used to speak also of the fathers as well as of the sons, calling them for distinction’s sake, ‘old Mr. Ferguson,’ and ‘old Mr. Morison,’—though both at the time were anything but old. Yet no one to her, and many with her, was for a moment to be compared with the stripling preachers. She was not one given to many words, especially about spiritual things, but I could read in her face how deeply she felt the force and the loving earnestness of the preachers of that time. The ‘new views,’ as the teachings of these men were called at the time, were so fresh and unwonted in that country village, and spoken so vividly and powerfully, that quickening and spiritual openings were widespread and great. The memory of it all makes some of us wonder if the same undiluted truths, though not now so new, were spoken with the same burning enthusiasm and simplicity and love,—if now the results would not still be as striking and blessed.

“Associated with that time, too, were the names of some of the first members of that little church at

Stane,—Thomas Nisbet, Ebenezer Loudon, John Allardice, Edward Marshall, and the old Mr. Galloway, the father of Rev. Nisbet Galloway. They were all men of mark and just such men as made the backbone of most of our early Evangelical Union churches. They were all men of the Bible too, who searched that book daily and were well able to defend 'the universalities' then so greatly prized. These, with others, before there was a meeting or meeting-place at Stane, were accustomed on the Sabbath morning, to walk over the Shotts Hill down to Bells-hill, where Fergus Ferguson, senior, was the minister, and in his prime as a preacher; and sometimes the same men walked in another direction to Bathgate, to hear the father of James Morison, another preacher of the day of weight and power. The wealth of memories gathering round about these men and these days make the early years of the Evangelical Union such as hardly, to some of us, can be repeated. But let the truth fill us and fire us as it did our fathers, and though their work is done, yet the same signs, in measure, will follow the preaching of the grand old Gospel, for the same living Lord is working with us still."

By reason of meetings like those held at Shotts, the son was soon as well known as the father, and "young Fergus" became a favourite preacher who seldom or never failed to secure an audience. He preached in halls, sawpits, by the wayside, in the fields, at pit-mouths, in kitchens and workshops, indeed, wherever he could get people to listen to

the Old Old Story he delighted to tell. The effect of his ministry was extensive and gratifying. He was cheered by the changed lives he saw in the case of many and confirmed in the conviction that the Holy Ghost had called him to the sacred work to which he desired to consecrate his life.

The evangelistic work was, however, not allowed to proceed without opposition, and many events occurred which, though intended to ridicule the efforts of the boy preacher, were over-ruled for the spread of the Gospel. A scene worth recording—a specimen of others—is described in an address on the difficulties with which he had to contend when he first took to preaching in the open air. “My father,” he said, “had announced the night before that I would preach at a mining village, Legbrannock, near Holytown, and some pot-house theologians had entered into conspiracy to oppose me, and put me down. They had got hold of a book called *Scripture Scales*, by Fletcher of Madeley, and had concocted some questions out of it. The rumour had been circulated during the day as to their hostile intentions, so that in the first place the meeting was largely increased, and many of the miners had come to do literal battle for ‘young Fergus’ if any violence should be offered him. I recollect that, standing on a chair, I had got half through my sermon, when a man came up to the side of my rude rostrum and said—

“‘Young man, I wish to put a question to you.’

“When asked what his question was, he replied, ‘Can God do everything?’

“I answered that certainly God was omnipotent. ‘Then,’ rejoined my questioner with a look of triumph, ‘Can he make two hills without a hollow between them?’ His associates shared in his laugh of triumph and ridicule; but, unfortunately for him, Professor Fleming had been lecturing in the Moral Philosophy Class during the previous winter on the Omnipotence of God, and had made the remark that of course, although omnipotent, He could not do impossibilities, which would be a contradiction in terms. So this remark, made shortly before, came to my aid, and I asserted that two hills without a hollow between would be a physical impossibility, as without the hollow, there would only have been one hill! But, I added, knowing that the chief opposition of the district was to the doctrine of resistible grace, there was another thing God could not do—He could not force a free will, since then also we would have a contradiction in terms, inasmuch as, if forced, the will would be no longer free. The general opinion was that young Ferguson had quite got the better of the ale-house theologians; but my only regret was that I had not known they were such till the meeting was over. The man had his Bible open at the Paraphrases; and, besides, the book was upside down. He had overshot the mark. He had taken strong drink to prime him, but had taken too much, and was thus in a tipsy state.”

Such encounters as this braced the youthful soldier of the Cross rather than awed him into silence. They were felt to be not of a destructive but of a stimulating character, calculated to prepare a divinity student for the time when he would have to deal with similar topics before persons of the same rank of life as those who questioned Fergus Ferguson on the village green. A session or two of such labours would form an excellent part of the curriculum of those whose future position necessitates them ministering in holy things to the common people.

CHAPTER III.

1843-1844.

*Theological unrest—New views of Rev. John Kirk—
Position of Congregationalists—Dr. Alexander's sus-
picion of students—Students' testing sermons—William
Bathgate overcome—Dr. Wardlaw's Questions—F.
Ferguson's Answers—Bold position before Committee
—His expulsion—His feelings of isolation.*

THE beginning of the Forties was a period of keen theological inquiry and religious awakening throughout the country generally, but more particularly in the west. There was a shaking of the dry bones and the spirit of intense solicitude had taken possession of many. The old faith in which they had been trained had lost vitality, and if held at all, was held as mere dogma, unrelated to experience and life. Calvinism, as represented in the Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, was denied by some, and doubted by others, and there was a deep yearning to know God and the work of His Son and Holy Spirit, as revealed in the sacred Scriptures. This gave rise to the Atonement controversy in the Secession Church, the effect of

which was experienced in all churches, and issued in the expulsion of James Morison of Kilmarnock, and three other ministers from that denomination, and the formation of the Evangelical Union. The Congregational body was also in a state of excitement by what were called "new views," proclaimed with remarkable force by the Rev. John Kirk, a young minister who had succeeded Mr. Moir in the pastorate of the church in Hamilton, in December, 1839. These views did not relate to the Atonement, but to the extent and nature of the work of the Holy Spirit in conversion. Mr. Kirk renounced the distinctive doctrines of Calvinism in all their ramifications, and preached God's universal love, an unlimited Atonement, maintaining that the influences of the Holy Spirit, divinely fitted and intended to save, were vouchsafed to every creature without distinction or exception.

Up till this time the great majority of the Congregational ministers were Moderate Calvinists, and a small minority in the north were of the rigid school of the Westminster Divines. In theory the denomination had no creed, but in practice they had a well defined and many articulated Confession of Faith. Across the Border, Congregationalists published their leading doctrines in a statement "which was not intended to present a scholastic or critical confession of faith, but merely such a statement as any intelligent member of the laity might offer as containing its leading principles," and in Scotland their views of divine truth were spoken of as doctrines most "surely

believed among us." These doctrines were a modified Calvinism, which it was understood every minister of the Independent order of churches believed, the most outstanding being universal Atonement, natural ability to believe the Gospel, moral inability to do so, eternal and unconditional election, and the limitation and irresistibility of the Spirit's work in conversion. The pastors of the Congregational churches generally professed and preached these articles of faith, and they constituted a considerable part of what was taught by Dr. Wardlaw in the Theological Academy.

Owing to the lamented death, by drowning, in the summer of 1843, of Dr. Wardlaw's associate in the Theological Academy, Mr. Morell Mackenzie, it was arranged that the Summer Session should meet during the months of May and June, 1844, in Edinburgh, and be presided over by the Rev. Dr. W. Lindsay Alexander, who was in every way competent for the duties he was called upon to discharge. From the first he had his doubts as to the state of mind of the students who were to receive his instructions, and took the first opportunity that presented itself of letting them understand his suspicions. One of their number sent a letter on behalf of the members of the class, which that year numbered twenty-nine, asking information as to the subjects to be considered, and the books that would be required for their studies. In reply, after giving the desired information, Dr. Alexander added a postscript in which he stated that "some scrutiny

would need to be made as to who should come to Edinburgh, and who should not; for when he agreed to teach the class, he did not know that the Rev. John Kirk, of Hamilton, was to be his rival in forming their theological opinions." This was the first warning which the young men received that they were viewed with distrust, and were to be tested as to the doctrines they held. The post-script created anxiety and its meaning soon became apparent.

The plan adopted to ascertain what doctrinal views the members of the class held was to require each one to prepare a sermon, on a prescribed text, which treated on the doctrines then in dispute, the sermon to be delivered before the Professor and others, who would offer their criticisms and put what questions they thought necessary to elicit the mind of the preacher more fully. Both students and teacher felt that they had reached a crisis, and the former were impressed with the fact that by their utterances they were largely determining their future in connection with the Congregational denomination.

The meeting for the delivery of the discourses was held in the month of October, 1843, in the Calton Convening Rooms, Edinburgh, and attended on behalf of the Academy by Rev. Drs. Wardlaw, Alexander, Gowan, Campbell, and a score of other ministers and laymen. Various pathetic scenes occurred during the meeting. A memorable one is recorded, which at once allows us to see the earnestness and goodness of the young men, and

the severe trial through which they were called upon to pass. While Mr. William Bathgate was reading his sermon he broke down and wept. Honestly bringing out his views, he was describing the difficulty he would have in pressing the sinner to immediate decision, if, at the same time, he believed that God might be keeping back essential grace from a non-elect soul. Knowing that the very utterance of these sentiments might have a serious effect upon his future prospects in life, yet feeling that he could not speak otherwise, the young man was overcome, and for a time could not proceed. The whole class was moved, as was the kind-hearted and renowned Doctor of Divinity in the chair, who felt himself placed in a very painful position. It was a distressing scene to all present, and manifested a spirit and conscientiousness on the part of William Bathgate which proved him to be of the stuff that martyrs and spiritual heroes are made.

Fergus Ferguson's prescribed text was, "And ye will not come to Me that ye might have life." Being a member of the Rev. John Kirk's church, he was naturally suspected of sympathizing with the doctrinal views of his pastor, and his discourse on such a text would enable his judges to see his theological whereabouts. It was impossible to preach on the Saviour's words without dwelling at length on the work of the Holy Spirit, the ability of man to believe the Gospel, and the reasons why the sinner would not go to Christ for salvation. After the sermon was over Mr. Ferguson was severely questioned by both

ministers and laymen present, and honestly stated his understanding of the words, and how they accorded with the sentiments he entertained. One aged layman became rather nettled at so young a lad opposing his seniors and teachers and sternly said,

“Young man, you must believe that the sinner is as dead and impotent as Lazarus was in his grave.”

To this observation no answer was given, the student thinking that silence was golden, and in the circumstances the wiser course to adopt. The Committee were anxious that he should have no sympathy with the tenets and work of his pastor, and especially those which related to the work of the Holy Spirit. They did not however succeed in changing his mind on the matters in dispute, but rather confirmed him in their scripturalness. He had no desire to differ from his teachers and the ministers of his denomination, at the same time he could not disown what he knew experimentally had blessed his own soul and which he found revealed so plainly in the inspired Word.

The Committee came to the conclusion, from the evidence afforded them by the sermons and examinations, that many of the students were believers in Mr. Kirk's doctrines, or inclined in that direction, and that decided means should be adopted to ascertain their real sentiments on the subject of Divine influence.

In carrying out this decision, Dr. Wardlaw, a few days before the annual meeting of the Congregational Union, held in Dundee on the first week of April, 1844, proposed the three following questions to each

of the students, the answers to which were read before the general Committee of the Academy in Dundee :

“ 1. Are your sentiments on the subject of Divine influence the same now as they were when you were examined by the Committee and admitted into this Institution ?

“ 2. Do you hold, or do you not, the necessity of a special influence of the Holy Spirit, in order to the regeneration of the sinner, or his conversion to God, distinct from the influence of the Word or of providential circumstances, but accompanying these means and rendering them efficacious ?

“ 3. Are your sentiments settled on the subject of the preceding query, or are you in a state of indecision, and desirous of time for further consideration and inquiry ? ”

To these questions, answers were sent to the Professor by all the students, Fergus Ferguson replying as follows :

ROSEBANK, NEAR HAMILTON,
12th April, 1844.

1. My sentiments on the subject of Divine influence are the same now as they were when I was admitted into the Academy.

2. I hold that without the influence of the Holy Spirit, the influence of the Word, or providential circumstances, would never effect the regeneration of the sinner or his conversion to God ; but I hesitate to admit that this influence is special, although I will not confidently assert that it is not.

(It has caused me unfeigned sorrow, that I so unequivocally intimated my concurrence with the minute entered in the books of the Committee, on the day of the examination, when admitted into the Academy, in which the influence of the Divine Spirit is designated "special." However much the peculiar circumstances in which I was placed, and the really undecided state of my mind, may excuse the step, I have, since that time, frequently wished that I had expressed *my leaning* to the opinion, that whenever the gospel is faithfully preached, the influence of the Spirit *does* accompany the word spoken.)

3. I have said that I *hesitate* to call the influence of the Spirit *spécial*. I am inclined to think it universal, from a broad view of the revealed character of God, and also from the general tenor of Scripture; but as there are several objections urged against this opinion, which I am not fully prepared to meet, and especially as there are some passages of Scripture which I cannot entirely reconcile with it, I think that I can, consistently with the above answer, ask time for further consideration and inquiry—I remain, yours very respectfully and affectionately,

FERGUS FERGUSON, JUN.

To the Rev. DR. WARDLAW.

The answers of the student, including the above letter, were laid before the Committee, which met in Dundee, and ten of them were pronounced

unsatisfactory. A similar Committee was appointed to deal with the ten students suspected of having departed from the faith, and submit them to a final examination. For this purpose a meeting took place in Glasgow on the 30th April, which after being constituted and the method of procedure determined, the students were called in one by one, and subjected to a searching examination as to their doctrines.

In the statement of the case prepared by those who found themselves out of harmony with the majority of the Committee, they say, "Some one or other of the members of Committee propounded a few queries on the influence of the Holy Spirit, and other collateral subjects to the students. Many of these queries were of such a nature as to require *profound thought*, and the utmost *calmness*, in order to their being answered *candidly* and *correctly*; consequently most of the students asked from the Committee written questions, saying that they would give them written answers, so that they might not, on the spur of the moment and especially under such exciting circumstances, give utterance to an opinion which, in their calmer moments, they would disclaim; and which might mislead the Committee as to the real sentiments which they held: but such requests were, in every instance, refused."

Mr. Ferguson took up a decided position, for he had thought out the questions involved more fully than when he was first examined on his entrance to the Academy. His mind was then in an

unsettled condition, and he saw the truth as through a glass darkly. From the time of his first examination he had been considerably troubled because he imagined he had not been faithful enough in expressing his sympathy with Mr. Kirk, and his evangelical presentation of the truth. He was, therefore, determined at all hazards to let his theological position be understood, and took what he characterized as "the bold step of declaring in favour of resistible grace and conditional election."

This was not done without a severe mental struggle, much prayer for guidance, and the study of the Bible. He tells us that he "used to lie awake at night making a strong effort to bring myself to accept the tenets which the Committee wished me to accept. But the imaginary picture which rose up before my mind, and really turned the scale, was the following:—I fancied myself preaching to an impressed audience from such a text as that which had been prescribed to me for my trial sermon—'Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life'—that I had waxed warm and earnest, and had pressed every hearer to decide immediately for eternity before leaving the building, but that some intelligent listener had put the question to me at the foot of the pulpit stair, Did you not sign a paper which declared election to be partial and unconditional? That imaginary scene, I say, decided my wavering resolution." With respectful boldness, Mr Ferguson let the Committee know that he held as precious truth that God had

provided in the Atonement of Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit all things necessary for the everlasting weal of all men. It was with a clear conscience that he had been faithful to the light, that he withdrew from the presence of his honoured teacher and those associated with him in committee.

Of the ten students who had been subjected to the testing examination, one had made an explanation which was pronounced satisfactory, but the remaining nine remained unshaken in their theological position. What was to be done with the recalcitrant nine? The question was a difficult one for Independents to solve, whose glory was that they had no doctrinal standard but the Bible. After being considered for hours, Dr. Wardlaw at last proposed a motion to the effect that their names should be erased from the roll of the Institution, "it being understood that they be re-eligible, when they come to the conviction and profession of sentiments in accordance with the understood principles of the Congregational body." This was seconded by the Rev. Mr. Machray and carried against an amendment, that they be not expelled from the Academy, "but that a committee be appointed to deal with them for two or three months in order to see if they could come to a right understanding upon the subject."

The students who had been waiting in a state of anxiety in a separate room were then called in, and the verdict and punishment were read to them in a series of resolutions. The scene was a solemn

and memorable one to all concerned, and considering the ecclesiastical position of the principal actors, remarkable. There was the gentle and revered Wardlaw, who during the time when the resolutions were read never lifted his head nor looked at the row of young men who stood before him. Both they and he were deeply affected and none more so than the youngest present. One of the resolutions affirmed, "That the doctrine of personal election to life and of the necessity of a special influence of the Holy Spirit to the conversion of sinners, as following up and effecting the sovereign purpose of electing grace—have ever been among the things most surely believed by the members of that body. It, therefore, followed, that it would be a dereliction of duty on the part of those who watched over the education of the students of the Academy, if any persons who held views at variance with the doctrines mentioned were admitted." The committee felt they were shut up to this conclusion, and the nine young men had to bow to their decision.

As they separated to their respective homes that night, these young servants of Christ did so with sorrowful hearts, no one feeling the severance more keenly than Fergus Ferguson. To be a minister of an Independent church was the ambition which had filled his soul and imparted the stimulus which urged him when at the University to equip himself to be a spiritual workman who needeth not to be ashamed. He had been taught by his mother and father to look up with feelings of reverence to Dr.

Wardlaw, and this sentiment grew with his years and strengthened with his strength. As he made his way to Rosebank Cottage, he was weighed down by a sad depression of heart. The future outlook was utterly unpropitious and there were no bright spots in its horizon. The friendship of many he honoured and loved would be denied him; henceforth he would be thought of and treated as unworthy of fellowship or as being an ambassador of Christ. The young lad of nineteen would have sunk under the burden had it not been that the conscious presence of Christ remained, that the Spirit of all consolation was his, and that there was a throne of grace,

“Where he could all his burdens roll
On God, and leave them there.”

CHAPTER IV.

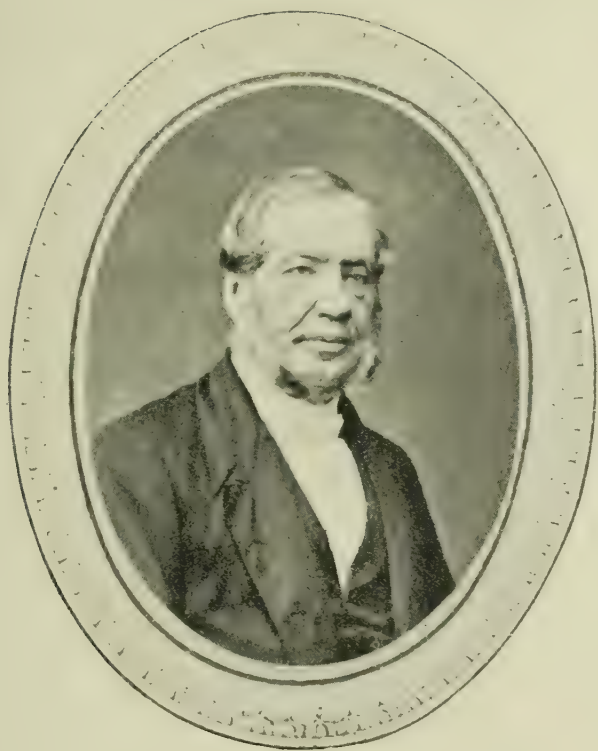
1844-1845.

Father's work in Bellshill Church—Ordination—New relationships—Son at Theological Hall, Kilmarnock—New Church, Glasgow—Revival meetings—Call—Acceptance—Degree B.A.—Ordination—First sermon—Blackfriars Street Church—Success.

WHILE the son was attending to his studies in the University and the Theological Academy, Mr. Ferguson, senior, was prosecuting his work as an evangelist in the villages round about Hamilton. He visited many places on Sabbaths and week days, and aroused a spiritual interest in the neighbourhood. More particularly was he successful in Bellshill, where he soon gathered together a large number of persons who were blessed by the Gospel preached. The hall, composed of two shops made into one, soon became too small for the numbers who waited on his ministry, and he and they set about to build a church, which they soon succeeded in doing. It was opened by Rev. Dr. Wardlaw in the year 1842, and Mr. Ferguson, senior, was ordained as pastor of the church in March, 1843, Dr. Wardlaw taking a

prominent part in the solemn service. Congregationalists, while inculcating the duty of all who aspire to the office of the ministry, to fit themselves by intellectual, moral, and spiritual training to be faithful preachers of the word, do not shut the door to the office so that no one who has not gone through a regular scholastic and theological curriculum of study, can become a preacher and pastor. They believe that the Head of the Church has left ample room for the admission to the ministry of those who have by private study, work, and the unction of the Holy Ghost proved themselves worthy of being called to be under-shepherds of the flock. Dr. Wardlaw, accomplished scholar as he was, recognized this principle, and acted upon it in the case of the first Bellshill Congregational pastor.

Young Fergus in after days delighted to recall the ordination of his father, and the presence and words of his reverend teacher on the occasion. In one of his works he describes the scene thus, "We fancy we see Dr. Wardlaw standing in the pulpit and beseeching the newly-ordained pastor to approve himself in all things as the faithful servant of God. Some of his sentences still linger in our recollection:—'O my brother!' he said, 'never forget that the greatest triumph which can be accomplished on earth is the conversion of a soul; and a minister's labours are never so highly honoured as when men are born of God through his instrumentality. It may be of importance to polish the jewel after it has been found, but the chief thing is to dig it out of the mine. It



REV. FERGUS FERGUSON, SENIOR.

may be, and it is, important to dress up the stone for the front of the building, but he does the greatest work who excavates it from the quarry in which it lay embedded.' When speaking of the way in which the Gospel should be preached, the 'old man eloquent' exclaimed again, 'Oh tell sinners to believe! tell them they have only to believe! tell them to believe now!' And then there was a sudden pause; the preacher's heart had filled; he had to wait a little till his emotion had subsided. The effect upon the audience was deep. The great majority of those who composed it had but recently passed from death to life themselves; and it delighted their hearts to hear a man so eminent in the Christian church speak so glowingly on the gospel of the grace of God."

The relationship of both the father and the son to Congregationalism and its leading Western divine became changed after the student's expulsion from the Academy. They came under the influence of another Christian minister and theologian, young James Morison of Kilmarnock, who was then exercising a marvellous influence in the country. His trial before the Secession Synod, which issued in his being cut off from that denomination, had been followed with earnest sympathy by the Fergusons, the doctrines for which he contended being those they viewed as containing the marrow of the Gospel. This, along with their adhesion to the teachings and distinctive doctrines of the Rev. John Kirk their pastor, led them to be suspected of departing from the understood creed of the Congregational Union, with the

result that in 1844 the elder Ferguson and his church were taken to task for their views of the Spirit's work as the young Fergus and his fellow students had been previously. After a long correspondence, eventually Mr. Ferguson was disowned, and his church denied fellowship with those belonging to the Congregational Union. This completed the severance and determined their future as co-workers with Morison and his brethren of the Evangelical Union, in preaching the truth as it is in Jesus as they understood it, by lip and life, voice and pen.

Young Fergus applied to be admitted as a student in the Kilmarnock Theological Academy, presided over by Mr. Morison, and attended the session of 1844, at once taking a high place in the classes and gaining the esteem of the Professor. In a letter written to his father in Bathgate, Mr. Morison gives an account of his class and the estimate he had formed of various students. "Mr. Fergus Ferguson," he wrote, "is the popular speaker, for popular talents far outstripping all the rest. He is also a first-class scholar, and a really good lad, I think. He preached for me last Sabbath day and captivated all hearts and mine too."

This estimate proved to be a sound one, for, from the first, the popular element was a prominent one in Mr. Ferguson's ministration, and mainly through it his goodness shone forth till all under him felt its power.

Events were occurring in Glasgow which had an important influence on the young man's lifework.

The severance of the nine students from the Theological Academy and the Congregational Union was not approved of by a large number of members belonging to the churches. They thought a mistake of a serious character had been committed, and in casting the students out for holding heretical opinions, they were going against their own avowed polity, and what was far more serious, the revealed will of God. Many of those who in Glasgow sympathized with the students, belonged to the church which met in North Albion Street, presided over by the Rev. Thomas Pullar. Mr. Pullar took the opposite side, and in a series of discourses controverted the doctrines of universal grace, conditional election, and the resistibility of the Holy Spirit's work in conversion. The position taken up by the students was assailed, by him, with some bitterness, ridicule was cast upon them for seeking to contradict their seniors, for being wise above what is written, and endeavouring to establish what was looked upon as a new faith. This gave offence to some of the most pious and intelligent members of his church; who had watched the conflict between the authorities of the Theological Academy and the students, with the increasing conviction that views of the latter, regarding God's universal love and collateral doctrines were in harmony with the declarations of the Scriptures and the Spirit of the Christian religion. The members who were out of harmony with the teaching of Mr. Pullar, were drawn together by their doctrinal affinities, and his opposition led

them to consider if it were not their duty to form a new Church, by which the new views would be upheld and proclaimed. After prayerful counsel, this course was determined upon and arrangements were made for its being carried out.

At that time there was a wide-spread awakening in the public mind in regard to religious matters, occasioned by the Theological discussions which were occupying the attention of the people more particularly in connection with what was called the "Morisonian Movement." The questions considered—doctrinal and practical—were those which pertained to the gospel testimony and its relation to the salvation of the soul. It was no uncommon thing for groups of people to be found asking, What about Christ, are we to believe that we might be saved? Indeed, the fact that there was a gospel at all, was glad tidings heard for the first time by not a few, who had been systematically taught that their salvation or reprobation had been settled before they were born, and that their eternal destiny would only be made known at the judgment day. The brethren in Glasgow, therefore, in originating their new departure, resolved to meet this state of mind by holding a series of revival meetings, and for this end secured the Trades' Hall, Glassford Street, as being convenient both for its size and central position.

The preachers who addressed the meetings evening after evening were Revs. James Morison, Kilmarnock, John Kirk, Hamilton, Fergus Ferguson, senior, Bells-

hill, and others, and from the first the hall was filled on week days and crowded to suffocation on Sabbaths. The excitement, though not outwardly demonstrative was deep, and the good done of the most encouraging nature. Christians were refreshed and advanced in the divine life, and those who had cared nothing for personal religion were led in scores to the foot of the Cross. Before the special meetings were concluded, upwards of eighty persons signified their readiness to join the church if formed, all professing that they had experienced the new birth and enjoyed peace with God. Towards the end of July, the Rev. James Morison formed the church, and dispensed the Lord's Supper to the members before an audience which filled to overflowing the hall, the adjoining rooms and the lobbies.

The infant Church grew rapidly in numbers and influence, and the office-bearers and members soon perceived, if they were to succeed they must needs secure a pastor who would be able to take his place as a power in the large city. Their eyes and hearts were turned, first towards the Rev. James Morison, Kilmarnock, who had suffered and done so much on behalf of the doctrines of the "Three Gospel Universalities" as they are called, the love of Father, Son, and Spirit for the whole human race—and who was a cultured scholar, an able theologian, and an eloquent preacher. The call was urged upon his acceptance with zeal, and every consideration favourable to its being entertained, but Mr. Morison did not see it his duty, at that time, to leave his

Kilmarnock church who had acted so nobly and lovingly towards him when cast out by his brethren.

After Mr. Morison refused the call, the church turned their attention to the student Fergus Ferguson. He was asked to preach in the Trades' Hall in the middle of September, when he had just attained his twentieth year. With fear and trembling he mounted the platform, and as he did so felt the responsibility of the work he was called upon that day to perform for his Master. In the forenoon he expounded the whole of Psalm cxxvi. and dwelt on "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." Luke xxiii. 31 was his text in the afternoon: "If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" In the evening he preached from John iii. 36, "He that believeth on the Son hath life." These discourses were favourites with the youthful preacher. The afternoon sermon had been preached, with marked effect, to the miners on the village greens, and by the pitmouths, and became a theme of conversation in the locality. His father overheard remarks concerning it which were made by two men in the street, and on going home asked, "Pray, what wonderful things have you been saying about green trees and dry trees, that the people are set talking about them so much?" Explanation followed to the delight of the parent. The preacher and preaching for the day arrested the attention of the Church,

so much so that one of the office-bearers declared "that whenever the members of the Church heard him their eyes and hearts were turned towards him as their future pastor." Afterwards Mr. Ferguson took his turn with the older preachers, fully sustaining the first impression made, and in December he received a formal call to take the pastorate, only one member dissenting because, as he said, "he was so young, only a boy." The call was accepted, and a union formed which continued for the exceptional period of fifty-three years.

Being anxious to take his degree of Bachelor of Arts he did not begin his work as the minister of the Church till the first Thursday in March, 1845, that being Glasgow Spring Fast Day. The City Hall was secured for the Ordination Services, which were of a particularly solemn nature arising from the youth of him who was to be ordained, the presence of Mr. Morison, and that of Mr. Ferguson, senior, who was to take a principal part in the proceedings. The morning of the day had been dull and showers had fallen, but before the hour of meeting—eleven o'clock—the sun shone out as if smiling on the union to be consummated. Many friends came from other churches, and railway trains and conveyances brought in not a few interested friends from the country. The father of the young man addressed the Church, urging the duties which devolved upon the members as witnesses for God, and pressed upon them the necessity of encouraging their pastor in the work to which that day he had been set apart.

Mr. Morison gave the pastoral charge, and pointed out the responsibilities of the position he occupied and how its duties could only be discharged by a careful attention to himself and his doctrine. Prayer was necessary for personal piety and strength, and devotion to sacred studies was essential to the minister who desired to be a workman who needeth not to be ashamed. "Never say," said Mr. Morison, "my young brother, that you have finished your studies, because your University career has been closed. Your studies should never be finished in time, as they will not be finished through eternity."

The evening meeting was attended by an audience of about three thousand people, when Mr. Morison preached a powerful sermon from the words, "To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts" (Hebrews iii. 15), in which he dwelt eloquently upon God speaking by His spirit through the Word, the Gospel-word to man; that word could be neglected, rejected, or received, and it was the solemn duty of every sinner to hear and believe the divine message now. The hearers were assured they could there and then hear the Word, believe the Gospel, and with burning words the audience were warned that—there was no escape if they neglected so great salvation.

On the Sabbath following Mr. Ferguson delivered his first sermon as an ordained minister of Jesus Christ, before a crowded congregation in the Trades' Hall. The text selected was, "I determine not to

know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (1 Cor. ii. 2). The words were suitable for the occasion; they expressed a resolve which had taken possession of the preacher's whole soul. Others might deal with the deep problems of divine things, and with subjects of a recondite nature which related to the history and development of the purposes of God, but Fergus Ferguson, junior, determined to take Christ crucified as the main element of all his ministrations. Those who know his teaching from the pulpit and the press understand how faithful he was to his first love and resolve as an official ambassador of Jesus.

The church in the Trades' Hall grew in such numbers that a new place of worship had to be looked for. A suitable church, capable of holding about twelve hundred people, was found in Blackfriars Street, off the High Street, facing the old College Green. This was rented and entered on the first Sabbath of June and became the scene of religious activity, a centre of spiritual power in the city, and a birthplace of souls. Many months did not pass till it was well known as the place where a young man was preaching to hundreds, three times every Sabbath day, and where not a few were converted to the Lord. Conversion was all but a new word to many an ear on which it fell, and that it was a possibility, excited attention. Many went because others went, some out of curiosity, others to sneer, and not a few with the honest intention of receiving light to dispel the spiritual darkness that brooded

over their experience. No matter what led the people to go to hear the occupant of Blackfriars Street Church pulpit, they all retired with the conviction that he was animated by a sincere desire to bless his hearers, and that he experienced what he wished others to enjoy.

CHAPTER V.

1845-1846.

Deacons—Sermons—Description of a service—Theological discussions among members—Church government and difficulties—Treatment by others—Opposition—An incident over-ruled for good—Progress in Christian charity.

THE position which Mr. Ferguson occupied when he assumed the shepherding of the spiritual flock which assembled in the church, Blackfriars Street, was no easy one. He was a young man who had not mixed with the surging tide of the world's thought, nor had he taken part in public movements outside those where religious and moral principles reigned. The world to him was a comparatively unknown region, and of its men and ways he knew all but nothing. Books, sacred and profane, especially the books of the student, he did understand; but how to govern men of various moods, tempers, and thoughts he had not been instructed and had to learn.

The deacons who were his co-office-bearers were generally experienced persons who understood busi-

ness, and they strengthened his hands and encouraged his heart. Of these, three or four stood out prominently :—Mr. James Clarke, a reverend-looking gentleman, with silvery locks and a benevolent countenance, who was well known in political and religious circles in the city as a staunch Voluntary and Liberal ; Mr. John Little, a banker, an intelligent and ardent friend of the church, who had prominence, not only on account of his Christian experience, but also because he had written *The Death-bed Experience of Mrs. Little*, a volume which had a large circulation and had been the means of doing a great amount of good ; Mr. Thomas Kennedy, a merchant, who gave weight to the diaconate and could be relied upon for a sound advice. Mr. John Milne, a classical teacher, was another office-bearer who exercised great influence and was looked up to with respect by all who knew him ; Mr. James Smith, who was much respected as a devoted Christian, who because of his silent influence might have been a member of the Society of Friends ; and Mr. Thomas Halket, who, besides being a deacon, led the Psalmody as a voluntary precentor. The beadle, a most important functionary in such churches, was Mr. Hugh Jackson, who walked about as if the church were under his sole management, and the young minister was his son. These office-bearers were all older than Mr. Ferguson, and as he sat in their midst he looked a mere lad amid mature men. They all, however, loved and were devoted to their pastor, and he honoured and loved them. The services were three

in number every Sabbath, and were from the first largely attended. The preacher's fame soon spread, and many who belonged to no church and had little interest in sacred things were attracted by the earnestness and the fresh thought Mr. Ferguson displayed in the treatment of his subjects. Those who joined the church came from all points of the theological compass, large numbers having had previously no very determinate conceptions of the truths of the Christian religion. There was scarcely a Sabbath, or a sermon delivered, when there was not one or more who confessed they were brought to the knowledge of the truth, and found the Bible a new book, rejoiced in prayer, and had views of the relation God stood in to man, which they had never thought of before. Old men and women who had felt the power of the Gospel for years were revived as from the presence of the Lord. Middle-aged men, who during the week were busily engaged in the business of the world, came to the church with gladness, morning, afternoon, and evening, to hear the message of mercy from the lips of Christ's youthful servant. Numbers of young men and young women of a thoughtful cast of mind came within the sweep of the influence of that sanctuary, and even boys and girls were captivated, some of them wearying till Sabbath came round, that they might go and hear the preacher who exercised a magnetic influence upon them. The fellowship roll increased in numbers, money came in freely, and in the early days it might be said regarding the members of Mr. Ferguson's church,

“Behold how these Christians love one another.”

One who was a hearer of Mr. Ferguson describes what he experienced when he attended his ministry for the first time. He writes, “In the year 1846, I came to the city of Glasgow from a small country town where I attended the Established Church with my parents. Religion was not much spoken about in a practical way by the inhabitants, and what was said had a most depressing effect on my young spirit. Like many other youths so situated, thoughts of God, death, judgment, and eternity frequently pressed themselves on my attention, but no definite ideas concerning them were possessed. This was my condition when I was taken to the church in Blackfriars Street, by my elder brothers, to hear a young preacher who was commanding the attention of a large section of the public. It was with more than ordinary interest I wended my way through unknown streets and took my seat in the gallery of the church, just in front of the pulpit. I had never seen such a large place of worship before, nor so many people assembled together to worship God. The scene was novel and it became impressive when silence prevailed and all eyes were directed to the door behind the pulpit. First a reverend-looking man with a fine countenance came in carrying a Bible and placed it on the desk with scrupulous care. Could this be the minister? I thought. No time passed before I got the question answered by a young man entering with bowed head covered

with black hair, a pale face, with indications of culture and with a modest and retiring demeanour. Where was his gown? Could he preach without one? I had never seen a minister in the pulpit with a dress-coat and no gown, and so young. But the minister he was, and commenced and went through the service in a solemn, dignified manner. What struck me most were his prayers and sermon. The prayers dealt with those who were present and had not much in them about the Queen and Royal Family, this part of the vineyard, and inferiors, superiors, and equals. The sermon was on the parable of the lost sheep, and was one earnest loving appeal to wandering souls to turn unto God, who was their true shepherd. When they were found, there would be joy in the presence of the angels, and for the first time, I heard emphasis laid on the words, 'the presence of the angels.' The joy was in God's heart, and revealed to the angels, it could not be hid from them; they shared in the divine joy over lost men restored. The message was simple, tender, and pathetic, and so stirred my spirit that it would have been no wonder to me if at that moment an angel had revealed his presence beside the young herald of the Cross. The whole service has been in my memory ever since, and never have I heard the same preacher but I have recalled the first time he made known to me the glad tidings of great joy."

Mr. Ferguson's preaching during the early years of his pastorate had all the characteristics of his

riper and maturer manhood. The discourses were flavoured with classical allusions and illustrations, indicating the student's predilections and his recent University studies. The texts chosen were those suggestive of evangelical truth, and if Christ and His atoning death were not plainly mentioned, they were sure to be brought in before the end was reached. He expounded the third chapter of the Gospel according to John, and he used to say, "These were the most fruitful series of sermons ever I delivered. Never a sermon was preached from that portion of Scripture, but some soul was brought to Christ." In his sermons he frequently touched on the doctrines which then had a large share of public attention, especially those relating to the Atonement, Election, and the work of the Spirit. The sermons, being partially controversial, set the hearers inquiring into these subjects, both in semi-private meetings, where a few were gathered together, and in their homes. During the interval between the forenoon and afternoon service, there were many such gatherings, where the time was occupied in examining the Scripture as to whether these things were so. In one worthy old widow's home, not far from the church, a meeting of this kind took place every Sabbath mid-day, which was like a Bible class or a theological school. Bibles were examined, and passage compared with passage, and the most abstruse subject in theology was debated with many words. What the minister said was discussed, and if his statements were not thought satisfactory he would

hear of it by one means or another. These conferences and discussions kept the whole communion in a lively condition, and added to the influence of the young community and its pastor.

The church was strictly Congregational in its government, and its services and business were arranged in harmony with the most liberal acceptance of that term. The ordinance of the Lord's Supper was dispensed every Lord's day after the forenoon service, and members admitted received the right hand of fellowship from all the rest present. Applicants for admission to the fellowship of the church were not only conversed with by the minister, but also by two brethren appointed by the church to wait upon them, and examine them as to their conversion and their experience. These reported their interviews to the church meeting, and in some instances not with the judiciousness of wise rulers of the household of faith. Then, there was a church meeting, held every week, at which business could be transacted, which could be easily abused by those who believed in loquacity and their own importance. Democratic independency ruled in Blackfriars Street congregation.

A church so constituted was not easily managed, and Mr. Ferguson found out this before he had been many years its pastor. The discussions on profound doctrines by those who had not been trained in theology became common, and the more profound the doctrines, the more dogmatism was displayed by the disputants. To set matters right between

those who differed, the pastor was asked to preach on this text and that, and explain them in consonance with the views held by one party or the other who carried on the contest. Being always willing to oblige he acceded to the requests, but, as in all similar cases, he only gave intensity and importance to that which it was his sincere desire to destroy. These unsettling influences were increased by other causes, and produced no little uneasiness on the part of the office-bearers and the more settled and devout members. Long afterwards, when Mr. Ferguson was taking a retrospect of the church's history, he said, when enumerating the difficulties they had to encounter, "Another source of difficulty was that when a new cause starts, it generally happens that some mal-contented, and those who had been disaffected in other denominations, gather round the new banner. On the other hand, I was very inexperienced and not very able, from constitutional temperament, to hold the reins tight as very restive horses require. So the church was in one notable instance thrown into confusion and discord, complicated by proceedings at law; but happily we weathered the storm and reached smoother water." Though he had to encounter the storm as the head of the church, it was not directed against him personally, for he had no enemies. If it had not been for the consciousness that he was respected and honoured by all, he would have sunk under the early trials through which he passed and the church would have suffered shipwreck.

While he had his duties to attend to and his difficulties connected with laying the foundation of a new church, unconnected with any denomination, he was also affected by the manner he was treated by other Christians, who spoke of him as a dangerous heretic who had departed from the true evangelical faith. He was denounced as a teacher of error, as one who deluded the people and taught that sinners could save themselves without the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit. The *odium theologicum*, which involved serious penalties, social and ecclesiastical, was used freely in Scotland sixty years ago, and this furnished a powerful weapon, which was unsparingly used by narrow-minded preachers and others in attempts to destroy the influence and usefulness of Mr. Ferguson. This opposition affected his sensitive mind, and all the more so, because he held most firmly the great evangelical verities as taught in the Bible and by the Christian church in all ages. This did not signify: he had been expelled from the Congregational Union, was a friend of Morison's, and a young man who had set himself to teach his seniors.

Two months after his ordination he was asked to deliver a temperance lecture, by the Glasgow Total Abstinence Society, in a large Presbyterian church. He had a crowded meeting, and the lecture was much appreciated. Next day he was told that the minister in announcing the lecture said, "While I have given my pulpit to Mr. Ferguson for his discourse I wish to say I have no sympathy with his religious doctrine." The opposition roused much curiosity, and

secured a much larger audience than would otherwise have been present, the people wishing to see and hear the preacher who had something uncommon to say, and was everywhere spoken against.

In speaking at a meeting not long ago, Mr. Ferguson gave another instance how opposition proved instrumental in spreading the truth. He said, "Let me recall one other incident which occurred in Milngavie in the autumn of 1847. Several appreciative hearers from that village attended my ministry in Glasgow every Sabbath day. They had a desire that I should preach the Gospel there on a week night, and had secured the public schoolroom, as they thought, for the service. The hand-bills had been already circulated; but the school had been built by subscription, and when the intention to hold the service was published abroad, a full meeting of the subscribers was called which overturned and recalled the decision of the few who had granted the use of the building. The result was, that the schoolroom was, in a manner, locked in my face. When I arrived I found the village seething with excitement, and a brawny smith, quite a Hercules in his way, came up to the open window of the conveyance which brought me and said, 'You will preach in my smiddy, sir, which has been hurriedly prepared for you.' He had a look in his face which seemed to say, 'Let those who would hinder you, dare to do so, and all my strength as well as my smiddy is at your disposal.' It looked as if half the village was crowded into that long

dark erection, lit up here and there with candles. 'The smith's anvil was my pulpit, an appropriate one; for God says that His word is like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces. The anvil heard unwonted hammering that night. Scotch people call a smith's anvil a 'studdy,' perhaps it is a thing that needs to be steady. But to me, literally, that night it was a study; for as I gazed upon the sea of faces, barely visible, as they stretched out to the very end of the dimly lighted house, I changed my text and chose one from which I could both defend my doctrines and preach the Gospel to all who heard me: 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' So while the Psalm was singing, I studied pensively on the 'studdy,' and preached what was thought to be a convincing discourse both theologically and experimentally. The result was that in a short time we had twenty-eight people in that village in connection with our church, and among them the smith and his wife. He emigrated to Canada soon after; but bear in mind that he and his, like thousands more, carried Christ with them, whom they had found at that time of controversy and revival marvellously conjoined."

The growth of Christian charity since these times has been gratifying. Such scenes are now altogether impossible in Scotland, which has made more progress in theology and liberality during the last half

century than any other country in the world. This advancement is largely due to those who were treated by their brethren as innovators and errorists, who were ready to sacrifice position, ease, and friends, if so be the word of the Lord might have free course and be glorified. In this heroic work Mr. Ferguson had a share, for he was faithful to what he knew to be true, amid coldness, suspicions, and painful opposition. He ploughed the fields, sowed the seed, and the present generation is reaping the harvest.

CHAPTER VI.

1845-1850.

"Mary Simpson's Memoirs"—His marriage—Formation of churches—Discussions in church—Illustration—Joining the Evangelical Union—"Protestors"—Law plea decided in favour of church.

THE religious movement with which Mr. Ferguson and his church were closely connected was pre-eminently of a practical nature. It was doctrinal, only in so far as was necessary to clear away the thoughts, in the minds of the people, which kept them away from God. One of the ministers who took an active part in the evangelical movement which was vigorously carried on in various parts of the country said, "The Gospel in all its fulness and directness cannot be preached so as to reach the conscience, except we, in some instances, walk roughshod over the limitations and unconditionalism of Calvinism." Even when most theological the supreme object these preachers had in view was to save souls; for this they laboured in season and out of season. In this glorious and inspiring work no one was more zealous than the pastor of Blackfriars

Street Church. This was his constant aim, and all things were made subservient to its accomplishment.

While Mr. Ferguson sought to carry out his mission by means of preaching and delivering addresses, he also began very early to use the press, the leaves of which could reach where the uttered word could not. From the first he loved to use his pen, and it was frequently employed; the first fruit which he gave to the public being a neat little volume bearing the lengthy title, *The triumph of the simple Gospel: As illustrated by the Useful Life and Joyful Death of Miss Mary Simpson*. It was published in 1846 and had a large circulation. There were several editions of ten thousand copies each sold, and it was the means of blessing many. The author loved this little volume and frequently referred to the way it had been received. In an address he said, "I once got a letter from a lady preacher in England telling me that this little book had been handed to her in a drawing-room meeting in London and had been made the means of her conversion, and thus the source of all her subsequent zeal. Only the other day I had a letter from an accomplished minister of a Congregational Church in Scotland expressing the hope that it was still in print as he had used it with benefit before and wished to do so again."

The charm of the book is found in its simplicity and its clear exposition of how the soul can obtain peace with God. Miss Simpson was a deeply religious woman and her experience is recorded with all the tenderness of one who had ardent sympathy



ABOUT TWENTY-THREE.

with his theme. The volume suited the times and was felt to be fresh and living. A revival spirit was abroad and it supplied the truth fitted to give freedom and rest to those who were anxious to be right in their spiritual relations. By means of it Mary Simpson, though dead, was made to bear testimony to the power of the simple Gospel which she had verified in life and death.

In the following year, 1847, Mr. Ferguson became the husband of Miss Alexy Grace Lang, who was well fitted to take her place as his helpmeet in every good and useful work. The marriage of a minister, especially one so young, frequently brings trials which are not easily overcome. A noted Presbyterian preacher, in giving advice to a student who had about finished his preliminary studies, said, "Now, James, if you are not married before you get a church, look out for a new church when you get a wife. I had to do this although previously no one could have been more respected and honoured by my people than I was." No such jealousies or difficulties resulted from Mr. Ferguson's marriage. Both husband and wife had learned the secret of standing well with the whole congregation and commending themselves by their work and conversation to all around them. Besides, the older and wiser members were of the opinion that no one required a companion who could enter into his whole life more than their minister. Having married in the Lord, Mr. Ferguson had the smile of heaven on his home.

In 1848 fifty of the members separated themselves

from the church to form a new church, which was to be connected with the Evangelical Union. This was the first departure of the kind, and the pastor acted in the kindest way, as they left and implored the divine blessing on their enterprise. These fifty formed the original members of what is now the flourishing church of Dundas Street, of whom the Rev. George Gladstone is pastor, with over eight hundred members. During the next year, 1849, other fifty members hived off to form a church in Nelson Street, Tradeston, and were treated in a like Christian manner by Mr. Ferguson. The loss to his communion was a gain to the Gospel and the kingdom of heaven, and in this he rejoiced. When asked for assistance he was ready to preach to the infant churches, and he encouraged the mother church to feel for and act towards them as her daughters, which was done with right good will.

Notwithstanding these new departures, the mother church continued to grow in numbers and influence. The weekly ministrations were pre-eminently evangelical; the preacher adopting the prevailing method, expounded a book of Scripture in the morning and took isolated texts in the afternoon. A few weeks after his ordination, in a letter to the Rev. James Morison, Kilmarnock, he said, "It has entered into my mind to lecture in the forenoons on the First Epistle general of John; there seems to be contained in it both much saving and sanctifying truth; upon the whole there does not seem to be many critical difficulties."

This intention was carried out and followed by the exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews, which tried the expository skill of the young preacher in his endeavour to open up the meaning of the deep things belonging to Christ and His priestly work. The lectures were lucid and practical, and most carefully prepared. The subjects treated from Sabbath to Sabbath stirred thought in the minds of not a few of the hearers who had only commenced to think on sacred themes, with the outcome, in some cases, of unrest and controversy. All such religious movements as the one with which Mr. Ferguson was identified provoke discussion and too frequently promote division. Doctrines assented to previously without question are subjected to review and criticism. The difficulties which are inherent in all religious subjects become more apparent. The understanding is employed to grasp and define what faith alone can apprehend, and when this is found impossible, it is said that the demands made in the name of religion are unreasonable and the doctrines taught not in harmony with eternal truth. As faith becomes weak and intellect exercises its power in increasing proportion, spiritual life loses its energy and church members become like feathers ready to be driven about with every wind of doctrine that blows upon them.

Some of the members of Mr. Ferguson's church were of this nature. He refers to them in a letter written on the day before his marriage. Writing to a brother minister for advice, he says, "I am almost

ashamed of our church, that every now and then there are some new views or other. I sometimes wonder if it be my fault, that is, if through my deficiency and unfitness for the arduous post at which I have been called to stand, the enemy thus comes in like a flood. Some of our best members have of late been attending the Rev. John Macleod Campbell of Row, who has been preaching on the Atonement of Christ with especial reference to the closing portion of the fifth chapter of Second Corinthians. His views on the work of Christ are something more than I have been accustomed to understand by 'universal pardon.' He seems to deny the substitutionary or truly propitiatory aspect of the work of Christ, being similar in sentiment to Erskine the Advocate, to whose views on the subject, as expressed in his book entitled *The Brazen Serpent*, my attention has lately been turned." He then goes on to explain the views he opposed, and adds, "I would not care so much for the views did they not aim a blow at the cardinal doctrine of the precious propitiation. Altogether both the writings and the sentiments in question seem to me to be a sad medley." The writer concludes by pointing out that some of his members whom he named, and who "manifested a sincere desire for holiness," had embraced Mr. Campbell's views and were for that reason on the eve of leaving their present fellowship.

The position of any minister in a church where there are hundreds of young thoughtful men and women, during a controversial period, is not one of

ease and comfort; more particularly when he is enthusiastic and has his whole mind fixed on doing good to his hearers, rather than in making them theologians. When difficulties of this nature occur the better plan is to keep as much as possible, in the usual ministrations of the pulpit, away from intricate questions, unless some decided result were certain from a thorough consideration of the doctrines in dispute.

Mr. Ferguson adopted neither course. In his expositions and sermons he enunciated his views on the Trinity, the Divinity of Jesus Christ, the substitutionary nature of the Atonement, and related topics, in a popular, though not elaborate manner, and while his discourses confirmed some in their faith they roused opposition in others. A specimen may be given which will illustrate the way in which the pastor preached on debated subjects, and how his hearers were affected. The former had incidentally touched on the doctrine of the supreme deity of Christ, and had presented in its favour the ordinary scriptural arguments. This caused more than usual attention and a request was made that he would preach on the words of Jesus uttered on the Cross, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. xxvii. 46). The request was complied with and the sermon was delivered one Sabbath afternoon to a full congregation. The relation of the human and divine natures of Christ and of the Theanthropic Christ to the Father was explained, but not with the fulness necessary to make

this mystery less mysterious. Some who had been previously inclined to Unitarianism were not satisfied and after a few weeks left the church, and some others, for various reasons, followed their example. Such departures make not for the prosperity or spiritual life of a church, nor for the encouragement of the pastor. At this period Mr. Ferguson went home after his ministrations sometimes with a heavy heart, but with the determination to stand fast to what he knew of Jesus Christ and the Gospel of his grace.

A few years later another difficulty arose through the church determining to join the Evangelical Union, which had been founded in 1843 by Rev. James Morison, Rev. John Guthrie, M.A., Rev. Robert Morison, and others. This association, though formed for evangelistic work, was fundamentally doctrinal, its basis being the "three great universalities; the love of God the Father in the gift and sacrifice of Jesus to all men everywhere, without distinction, exception, or respect of persons; of God the Son, in the gift and sacrifice of Himself as a true propitiation for the sins of the world; and of God the Holy Spirit in His present and continuous work of applying to the souls of all men the provisions of divine grace."

Mr. Ferguson had been associated in religious work with the Evangelical Unionists since being expelled from the Glasgow Theological Academy, and so also had the rest of the nine students and the Congregational churches and ministers who had been disowned by Dr. Wardlaw and his party. They

were affiliated to the Evangelical Union, though not ecclesiastically nor formally connected with it.

Mr. Ferguson and the majority of his church thought the time had come when it was their duty to join the Evangelical Union, which left all churches independent; free to conduct their internal affairs without any interference or any relation except brotherly counsel and mutual aid in the common cause of advancing the Gospel. A minority, led by a few determined brethren, opposed this action and protested against it most vehemently. They finally left the church in a body and took to themselves the name of "Protestors"; carried the matter in dispute, in an appeal from the Sheriff, to the Court of Session to secure £850 of a building fund. After a long and trying period of litigation, from 1852-1857, the Court decided that the pastor and members who remained were the *bona fide* church who had a right to the money and all the property. This was a great deliverance, and in the end the lessening of the number on the roll was overruled for good. Though some of the protestors were men who had taken part in political and other agitations, and were well known in the city as strong-headed and self-willed, they were baffled in their attempt to get the church and its property into their hands. Mr. Ferguson was, in some respects, not the one to keep such members in their place, unless forced to do it. Sooner or later the contest must needs be engaged in to determine which was the stronger. The Union proposal brought on the

conflict, and the astute, experienced men found that young Ferguson, though gentle by disposition and desirous for peace, could put down his foot and manifest an unflinching front when the honour and purity of the church were at stake. The struggle cost him much in health and in heart, but he came off the victor, and ever after was a stronger ruler in the household of faith and a wiser counsellor to those who needed his advice. Such experiences are never without compensation to those who are wise enough to master the lessons of life.

CHAPTER VII.

1851-1854.

*"Peace with God"—Its contents—Calvinistic controversy—
Mr. Alex. Jamieson—Discussion in City Hall—Its
effects—"Anti-Pelagius" in "Scottish Guardian"—
Letters to "Anti-Pelagius"—"Bible Election."*

MR. FERGUSON could say with the Apostle Paul, "Cast down but not destroyed." Amid his pressing pastoral duties and difficulties he kept himself in right relation to his divine Master and his work, resolving not to be diverted from preaching the Gospel, that those who heard might be blessed for time and for eternity. The work of conversion was still going on and many were being turned to the Lord. Some of these were of a striking character, and the marked change wrought in their lives had its influence on others. This cheered him amid his onerous duties and made him more faithful in dealing with those who waited on his ministry.

As a means of extending his influence, Mr. Ferguson began in 1847 to write a series of articles in the columns of a weekly newspaper, the *Christian News*, on "Peace with God," which were issued in

1852 in a volume which passed through many editions and has been the means of leading a number of anxious souls to the enjoyment of this great blessing. In the preface to the fourth edition, issued in 1862, the author wrote, "I have been gladdened from time to time to learn that those whom I never expect to see in the flesh, and who will never, in all likelihood, see me, have entered into the rest of justification and holiness through means of this volume. Thus by the power of the press rendered subservient to the power of the Spirit of God is the sphere of the Christian minister widened and his usefulness mightily increased. And assuredly one of heaven's joys will consist in being introduced to those glorified spirits who on earth, although unknown to us, had been blessed by one's sermons or writings, and turned from darkness to light."

In this spirit the little treatise is written. The subject at the time was looked upon as of the greatest practical importance, and the phrase "Peace with God" was on the lips of many. The book was suited to the spiritual state of not a few, but it can only now be read to profit when the reader is in a certain frame of mind, or surrounded with the atmosphere of revival. When these conditions obtain, few books would be more valuable to those who are asking, what must we do to be right with God and have peace with Him? To all anxious souls Mr. Ferguson's treatise will prove a gentle and valuable guide.

For some years after 1856, the church in Blackfriars Street suffered in number and spirit from the action of the "Protestors," its progress being checked and its pastor discouraged. The effects of all his labours and trials were telling on him, but still he continued at his post. In the spring of 1853 circumstances occurred which, though intended to injure the cause of a full and free Gospel to every creature, turned out to the advancement of what they were meant to injure.

The denomination of Christians to which Mr. Ferguson and his church belonged were known in Glasgow and the West of Scotland as "Morisonians," the correct designation being "Evangelical Unionists." An Association bearing the name of the "Protestant Laymen's Association" set itself to oppose and, if possible, destroy the denomination by trying to prove its doctrines unscriptural and not fit to be recognized as belonging to evangelical Christianity. It defended Calvinism as set forth and defined in the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms. Its chief agent was Mr. Alexander Jamieson, who was a trained lecturer and had earned a popular reputation and influence in many discussions with Roman Catholics and Infidels. Mr. Jamieson was supported by the pen of Mr. Charles M'Ewan, a working man, who was a metaphysician by nature and an ardent student of Jonathan Edwards. Both these defenders of the doctrines of the Genevan Reformer were remarkable for their theological knowledge and their reasoning prowess. Mr. M'Ewan's

letters and pamphlets would have done credit to the mental power of a learned philosopher, and Mr. Jamieson was an opponent who could vindicate his theological position with a logical force not easily resisted.

Mr. Ferguson was brought into conflict with the latter through delivering a lecture on the morality of Secularists compared with the morality of the Protestant Laymen's Association. This lecture was occasioned by incidents which need not be detailed, and the subject arose out of the way in which both the champions of orthodoxy had denied free will to man, contending that all his thoughts and actions were immutably and eternally foreordained by God, who as the First Cause must necessarily comprehend the last effect.

In his discourse Mr. Ferguson showed that these doctrines, so far as they related to man, were the same as those of George Jacob Holyoake, who taught that "the opinions and actions of men result from the original susceptibilities and external influences which affect them," concluding his lecture by saying, "Socialists and Secularists maintain that man's actions are fixed by organization and circumstances. The Protestant Laymen's Association maintains that all men's actions are fixed by God, the great First Cause. Both systems make man quite helpless, quite irresponsible; only the latter is the more impious and blasphemous of the two, which admitting the sinfulness of sin, fathers it all on the Deity! Far rather no God than such a God."

The lecture was listened to by a crowded congregation, among whom were Mr. Jamieson and his friends, who lost no time in entering the field, announcing a review of what Mr. Ferguson had said and challenging him to publicly defend his position. The meeting took place in the City Hall, but Mr. Ferguson was not present, he having made a previous engagement to attend the inauguration of the United Kingdom Alliance for the suppression of the Liquor Traffic, in Manchester.

On returning to Glasgow he was again challenged by public placard to meet Mr. Jamieson in the City Hall to discuss the question, "Do the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments teach the doctrine of eternal and immutable predestination." The meeting was large and it was soon seen that it was divided on the subject. When Mr. Jamieson appeared with his chairman and supporters he was received with demonstrations of delight by a section of those assembled. "Where is Mr. Ferguson?" was asked eagerly, and those opposed to his theology began to think that he had reconsidered the propriety of taking part in the proceedings, as some of his friends had advised. The surmises were all set aside when he was seen shortly after passing through the hall, wending his way to the platform. He looked pale and was evidently nervous, being unaccustomed to such scenes, and in this respect was a marked contrast to his opponent, who was cool and collected, ready for the fray.

The debate was ably conducted on both sides, but

the method and spirit of the two speakers were very diverse. Mr. Jamieson was as cold and logical as the system he supported, and Mr. Ferguson was solemn and earnest in his utterances. The usual arguments were adduced and grappled with, and the passages of Scripture generally thought to teach the doctrines of Calvinistic preordination and unconditional predestination were set forth with force by the former, and while the latter sought to meet his opponent on his own ground he dwelt more particularly on the declarations of God's love to all men, and their responsibility for their own salvation or condemnation. Mr. Ferguson made frequent appeals to the consciences of his audience, which roused Mr. Jamieson not a little, who said such appeals were not discussion, and he objected altogether to "preachment"; which he declared was for the pulpit, but altogether out of place on the platform. The audience was deeply excited throughout, and after four hours the meeting ended, both parties claiming that their side had gained the victory.

One effect of this discussion was that Mr. Ferguson seemed to have been endowed with renewed strength in body and mind. Another was that a considerable acquisition of members was secured to the church. A noted instance was that of a publican who went to the City Hall, a follower of Mr. Jamieson, but was so affected by the earnestness of his opponent and the Gospel he preached, that before he closed his eyes in slumber that night he was a believing child of God, and resolved to give up the business of placing drink

before his neighbour for gain. This is one of the few cases where a public discussion and the controversy with which it was associated has been the means of improving a church, inspiring its pastor, and imparting newness of life. The tide of progress turned at that period and flowed steadily for a long series of years.

Out of the discussion another opportunity of vindicating the doctrines of a liberal evangelical theology presented itself. The proceedings in the City Hall were reported in the columns of the *Scottish Guardian*, a weekly newspaper, the organ of the Free Church in Glasgow, which drew forth a letter, bearing on the debate, from a writer who signed himself "Anti-Pelagius." Mr. Ferguson being specially mentioned by this correspondent, felt it to be his duty to reply to the serious allegations and erroneous statement of his doctrines contained in the communication. He sent a letter to the *Guardian* which was replied to by "Anti-Pelagius," the editor appending to his letter the words, "the discussion is positively closed." Mr. Ferguson felt that he could not allow the matter to end in that way. To use his own words, "I felt, however, this communication from 'Anti-Pelagius' to be of some importance, I felt glad that I had drawn it out. I felt convinced that I would be able (God helping me) to set off our views of divine grace to advantage in answer, and in opposition to its allegations, I therefore conceived the purpose of replying to it *seriatim* in the columns of the *Christian News*."

The resolution was carried out in a series of ten letters, in which he discussed the main distinctive doctrines of Calvinism, Pelagianism, and what was then known as Morisonianism. In the letters he displayed a thorough knowledge of the subjects under discussion, and the meaning of the Bible statements which had been quoted as opposed to his teaching. He disowned the name of Pelagius and said, "I can sign myself 'Anti-Pelagius' with as clear a conscience as you can do." So he could, for there is hardly one tenet of the system as stated by such writers as Wiggers which he could accept. The doctrines he held were those which extolled the grace of God, urged the necessity of the Holy Spirit's work in conversion, and the freedom and responsibility of man.

When the letters were brought to a conclusion in the weekly issues of the newspaper, a demand was made by many readers for their publication in the form of a volume. The request was acceded to by the author, and they were published under the title, *Bible Election*.

In the Preface he says, "What weighed principally with me, and induced the decision to publish, was the information that spiritual benefit had in some instances been reaped from their perusal. One deeply interested reader of our publications in the Western Islands wrote to a brother minister, who was kind enough to report the fact to me, that his mind had been much enlightened by their perusal on some points of the way of salvation. A young mother waited on me in the vestry of my chapel, to apply

for church fellowship. She and her husband had not long come from London, where they had sat under Dr. Hamilton, the celebrated author of the *Mount of Olives*. Her husband had subscribed for the *Christian News* for the sake of its temperance information. Her eye one day lighted on one of the early letters to 'Anti-Pelagius.' She eagerly devoured it, and waited impatiently every Saturday for the paper. She was brought to think deeply of the value of her soul and the love of her Saviour. She fervently said 'Amen' to one paragraph in which I stated that no irresponsible little infant could be in hell. In that her motherly heart instinctively acquiesced. She was thereby completely repelled from the theology that taught the opposite, and wished to be joined to the people of Jesus."

When the volume was all but finished it occurred to Mr. Ferguson that he should make an effort to find out who his opponent—who hid himself under the *nom de plume* of "Anti-Pelagius"—was. It had been whispered that he was a noted Free Church divine of the city, and the name of the Rev. Dr. Walter M'Gilvray of Free St. Mark's Church was mentioned. While correcting the last sheets of the book for the press, the thought struck Mr. Ferguson that he might write to that gentleman and see if he was the person to whom he had been replying. A letter of inquiry was sent to Dr. M'Gilvray, who at once replied from Aberdeen, to which he had been translated a few weeks previously, "I have no hesitation in avowing that the letters which appeared last winter in the

Scottish Guardian under the signature of ‘Anti-Pelagius’ were written by me.”

This gave his volume on *Bible Election* greater value, for Dr. M‘Gilvray was, at that time, one of the ablest thinkers and scholars in his denomination. His power in discussion was not of a common order, and for young Ferguson to meet such a champion of Confessional Theology was like David going forth to meet the Philistine, who defied the armies of the living God. That the triumph belonged to the stripling, on this occasion, arose not from his being more able and powerful in argument than his opponent, but because his doctrines were more in consonance with the teachings of the sacred writers.

Long afterwards Mr. Ferguson described these controversial proceedings. In a sermon he said :—

“I remember a strange experience I had as far back as the year 1854, which also may be called ‘the days of old.’ A champion of Calvinism had challenged me to public debate in the City Hall of Glasgow on account of certain allegations which I had made in a Sabbath evening sermon in my own church, and which challenge I thought it my duty, in the circumstances, to accept. I remember the trepidation with which I looked forward all day to the discussion, for I had had no previous experience of such meetings, yet I believe the Lord stood by me, and the report of the discussion as given in the *Scottish Guardian* newspaper, the organ of the Free Church at the time in this city, did not a little good by informing the general community as to our

special doctrines. Dr. Candlish called attention to the debate in the Edinburgh Free Presbytery as an important one, and the fact was that the discussion was extended to every district of Scotland, and even into the north of Ireland; for the champion to whom I have referred went everywhere challenging our ministers to a public debate, many of whom met him, or intelligent laymen in their place. Thus great good was done throughout the country by the elucidation of our views, and the *Evangelical Repository* was started as a result of these discussions, which, for upwards of thirty years, as a quarterly magazine, held aloft the banner of the truth."

The theological conflict by and by ended, and those who had been prominently engaged in the fray found more congenial work. Mr. Jamieson, through the influence of Principal Candlish and others, became an ordained minister of the Free Church, but did not succeed so well in the pulpit as he did on the platform. Dr. M'Gilvray was seen no more in the theological arena, but remained an able and successful minister. Mr. Ferguson continued his usual labours and gradually got out of the controversial atmosphere by which, for no personal reason or desire, he was surrounded. Controversy was alien to his nature, and in opposing what he thought error, he constantly made apologies for doing so. All who loved his Saviour he desired to love and work with; for them he prayed, and longed for the time when divisions should cease and brotherly love abound.

CHAPTER VIII.

1860—1862.

“Holiness”—Its contents—Evening discourses—Bill-poster—“Passing events improved”—Sermon on Prince Albert’s death—A student’s description—“Things new and old”—Its contents—Failing health—Generous offer—Visits Palestine—Benefits of travel.

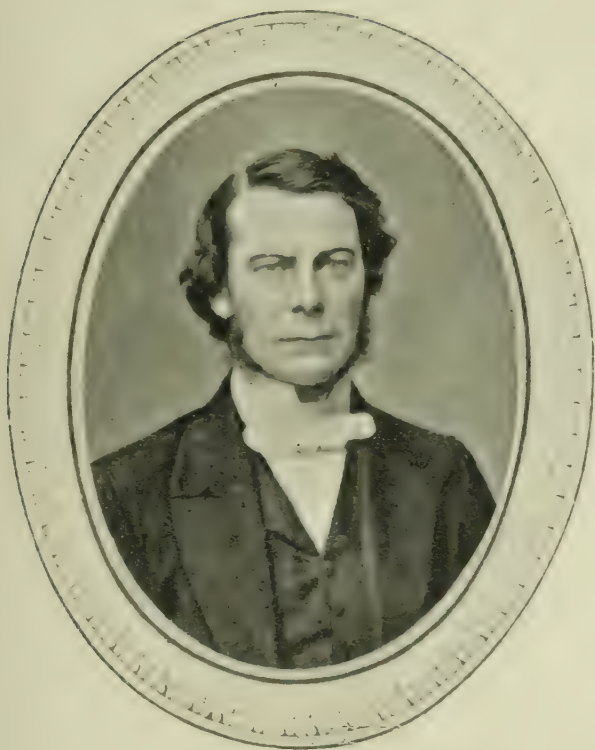
No one can dwell long in the region of disputation and preserve the fine Christian spirit which should animate those who serve the Lord. Sometimes it is necessary to defend the faith once delivered to the saints, but it is even more necessary to keep the heart with all diligence, that out of it may flow the issues of a holy life. Mr. Ferguson must have thought after this fashion, for at the time, and immediately after he had passed through the contentious period recorded in the last chapter, he set himself to the systematic study of sanctification, the fruit of which he issued in a volume called *Holiness, or what we should be and what we should do*. In the Preface, which is dated December, 1860, he says:—“Of late I have become ambitious to be the author of a work which would be calculated to lead the believer into

the paths of purity, as my former little volume led the inquirer into the way of peace. It is the province of the Spirit of God to awaken within the heart of sinful man two great desires, the desire for safety and the desire for sanctification, and if the Christian teacher would co-operate with God, as God wishes him to do, he must in his discourses and publications, meet these two distinct cravings, the hunger after forgiveness and the hunger after holiness."

The work did not meet with the reception of the previous one, which treated of peace with God. The circulation was not so large, arising partly from the nature of the subject and partly from the change which had passed over the public mind. The revival spirit was not so strong as formerly and other matters, than those of a religious nature, absorbed attention. The contents of the book, however, are not inferior to any which the author had previously published. The nature of holiness both negatively and positively is considered in the opening chapters, the positive definition of the experience being given in the words, "Holiness is obedience to the revealed will of God; and the will of God we find clearly revealed in the decalogue of which the admirable epitome was given by Jesus, 'Thou shalt love the Lord Thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like unto it, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' This is the divine definition, and those who are dominated by love to God and man are possessors of that holiness without which no

one shall see the Lord." Mr Ferguson expounded and enforced this doctrine, and though not so mystical as some theories of the higher life, it is as much in harmony with what men should be and do.

After Mr. Ferguson gave up preaching three times each day, he resolved to deliver a monthly evening sermon on the second Sabbath of the month. He adopted the system, almost from the beginning, of taking as the theme of his discourse some event which occupied public attention. His peculiar genius for finding spiritual lessons in striking incidents and instruction in everything, enabled him to treat his subjects in a popular and impressive manner. These monthly meetings were successful and the audiences were large. Mr. James Smart, who was fifty years under his pastorate, writes: "These evening discourses for many years drew large congregations composed of all classes of the community. After counting the collection which was taken at the church doors, I frequently could not get into the church to hear the sermon, passages, platform, and pulpit stairs, even the vestry being filled with eager listeners. In those early days the posting of the bills announcing the lectures was entrusted to an old man named Gibson, who was a member of the church. He once told me how great was his pleasure in the work and that he never put up one of the bills without a prayer. Mr. Ferguson gladly admitted that not a little of his success depended on the faithful bill-poster whom he highly esteemed, and whom he watched over to the end of



ABOUT THIRTY-FIVE.

his life. On his last visit to this old faithful servant of Christ, his pastor remarked to him that he was not afraid of death. Lifting his head he replied with a smile, 'I'm no feared for death, the king of terrors and the terror of kings.'"

Some fastidious critics misunderstood and others were not sure about this mode of presenting the truths of the Bible to the people. They thought it a new departure, which to a great extent it was in those days, though now it is a common method of expounding moral and religious truth. Mr. Ferguson had no doubt as to the propriety of his conduct, and believed he was following in the footsteps of the Great Teacher, who took for His texts the lilies of the field, the fowls of the air, the sower who went forth to sow, and the fall of the tower of Siloam. When a striking event happened he asked, "Why should I not take advantage of making it the means of lifting up Christ before the minds of my fellow-citizens?" Many years after he remarked, "I never tried to make the people laugh, tickling the ears of my audiences with fun and studied wit on a Sabbath evening. I always used topics for advancing solemn lessons on the Gospel of Christ. To this day I am surprised at the number of people who will say when I am introduced to them, 'We have heard you in your monthly lectures in Blackfriars Street.' Without doubt many found the Saviour in this city through God's blessing on these evening discourses, for they have told me so, and are Glasgow's salt to-day. Others have emigrated

to the ends of the earth to whom they were the gate of life, as I have been informed by letter and personal interviews when I visited America, and it is believed that not a few are in the better world, 'washed in the blood of the Lamb,' because they were my hearers when I was delivering these monthly lectures."

At the urgent request of friends a volume containing eleven of the monthly evening discourses was published in the beginning of 1862, under the title *Passing Events Improved*. In the Preface the author explains why he adopted and continued this mode of preaching the Gospel. He says:

"My chief reason for adopting and continuing such a course was that thereby a greater audience was attracted, and thus a greater amount of good done than if only an ordinary topic of address had been advertised. Individuals were induced to attend the house of God who would not otherwise have done so; and through the instrumentality of what they heard, were not only added to the church over which I am placed, but apparently to the church of the living God. I have also been encouraged in my course by remembering that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself was an eminently illustrative preacher, and that He not infrequently founded His warnings and invitations on incidents of Jewish history, and on the occurrences of His day."

The first discourse contained in this volume is entitled "The Faded Flower," and was preached on the 29th December, 1861, on the occasion of the

lamented death of His Royal Highness Prince Albert. This discourse, for eloquence, pathos, and spiritual power, takes a foremost place among the many which were published on that memorable event. Prince Albert died on Sunday morning, and the city bells tolled by the order of the Lord Provost in the afternoon. Mr. Ferguson in eloquent terms referred to this token of the country's grief, saying, "Toll out, ye solemn bells, ye once rang merrily on his bridal day, also when his children, the heirs and heiresses to the throne, were born, and when he passed through our ancient city in 1849. Now toll out solemnly his death-knell. Let the sorrow-stricken hear you and moderate their mourning when they know that even a Queen has been widowed, and princes royal made fatherless. . . . Toll, ye solemn bells, in the crowded cities of the land, and let our artizans know that whatever their hardships may be, it becomes them to bless God for their health, and think prudently of their latter end. Toll out in rural parts, and evoke the sympathetic and serious tear from the eye of the lonely mountaineer. Toll out in the districts that stretch to the sea—the sea that must bear to the sailor-prince, the tidings that he is fatherless, and when America hears them, may she, in sympathy for our widow Queen, prefer peace to war. Toll out on the shores that look over to the continent, the continent from which he came to this island home, and let all the German nationalities and European kingdoms hear your affecting *memento mori*. Solemn bells, ring out in Coburg and in

Gotha, and call forth the tears of his fellow-countrymen. And continue to ring and to preach in Canada, in South Africa, India, Australia, and New Zealand, as the tidings are wafted thither, employed by the Holy Spirit of God for the conviction and conversion of souls."

In a communication from one who knew him, Mr. Ferguson is described as he appeared to two youths who entered Blackfriars Street Church one Sabbath evening in 1861. "Every seat was packed. The last sound of the bells had died away, and a hushed expectancy fell over the congregation, when a side door opened, and there entered a man of middle height, ministerial garb, and with head slightly bent. Quietly and reverently he ascended the pulpit, and in a few moments announced the opening hymn. It was then that his face was clearly seen—a face 'sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,' and set in a frame of dark glossy curls, with which nature at that time had amply provided him: a face expressive of mental vigour, and of a heart that could melt with kindness or thrill with heroic emotion. That subtle something which is called genius seemed also to hover around the ample forehead, to gleam in the dark and quiet eye, and to give an indefinable music to a voice which, though strong, was not loud, yet clear and well modulated."

This description is true in every particular, more especially in regard to the subtle something which made the audience feel that they were spoken to by one who had the secret of the Lord. It was this

charm which gave the preacher power even when his hearer could not follow him in his exposition, and made his discourses, whether printed or uttered, attractive and impressive.

A few years later a volume of sixteen of the evening lectures was published, entitled *Things New and Old*, containing "Discourses on practical and Doctrinal Subjects." In this volume such subjects as "Kilsyth Revival," "The Death of Sir Wilfrid Lawson," "A Village Worthy," and the "Lost Diver" were treated in a popular, though not sensational, style, and instructive without the coldness of formal theology. The author's peculiarly fascinating style appears in pages of both volumes to perfection. That wonderful magnetic power which made Mr. Ferguson an eminently successful preacher is not lost, and as we read, we are, as it were, conscious that we hear the living voice of the preacher rather than peruse what he has written. A literary journal when noticing the last-named book, observes, "By means of felicitous imagery, seldom elaborately wrought out, but merely introduced for illustration sake, he verifies theology and secures for its great truths a permanent lodgment in the heart of his hearers."

The incessant work and worry which necessarily attended the formation and growth of a young church, more especially in the circumstances in which he was placed, began to tell on Mr. Ferguson's strength. As he was wont to remark, he had elements of strength in his body, but he had also elements of weakness. The latter gradually mani-

fested themselves, and sometimes he was unable to perform all the duties of his office to his satisfaction. This was a trying period and a difficult one for both pastor and people. A long rest was necessary, and while both parties were meditating on what was best to be done, an opportunity of accomplishing the end desired was presented in a providential and kindly way. Major General Lang, a relative of his wife, was returning to this country from India, and he sent an invitation to Mr. Ferguson, in company with a young friend, to meet him in Egypt and make with him the tour of Palestine. The generous offer was at once gratefully accepted, the church giving him four months' leave of absence, promising to do all they could to keep up efficiency in all departments of work until he returned. Arrangements were soon made, and he started on this, his first travel in foreign parts, on the evening of Thursday, March 6th, 1862.

As we will have occasion to notice shortly, Mr. Ferguson was one who not only loved to visit other countries and places of historic interest at home, but he had the peculiar gifts of observation and memory, which enabled him to take in and remember all that he saw. Some people can visit a city, the ruins of a palace, castle, or houses where distinguished men and women have been born, looking at all things and seeing nothing. This was not the case with Mr. Ferguson. What he looked at he saw, what he saw he remembered, and what he remembered he could turn to use in the pulpit or

on the platform. To him, all objects of interest had a meaning and could be utilized for spiritual purposes, made to adorn a discourse or to press home to the heart an important lesson. Such men by becoming travellers enrich those of their less favoured brethren. They may go away with hands and minds comparatively empty, but they return laden with spoils which, while they do not impoverish others, enrich those to whom they are called upon to minister. For this reason ministers who visit Palestine, as a rule, become more useful in expounding those parts of the New Testament which treat of places made memorable by Him whose presence made them sacred and the whole country *The Holy Land*. It has been so in numerous instances, and in few more so than in the experience of the minister of Blackfriars Street Independent Church.

CHAPTER IX.

1862.

Travels—Paris—Madame Guyon—Alexandria—Pompey's Pillar—Cairo—Dr. Anderson's grave—Pyramids—Scene from Cheops—Jerusalem—Jewswailing—Prince of Wales at church—Buckle the Historian—Farewell to Holy City.

MR. FERGUSON has enabled us to follow him in his travels and to use his eyes and ears in seeing what he saw and hearing what he heard. His travels are recorded in two volumes which are rich, racy and deeply interesting. They contain an enlargement and continuation of letters he sent to his congregation, which were read at the close of the service each successive Sabbath. The description of the scenes he saw and his experience with those with whom he came in contact are supplemented by religious reflections, which make them of value not only as books of travel but as food for the spiritual part of the reader's nature.

Some, who have used them as hand-books in their travels in Palestine, have said, that they were far more instructive and served them better than the

formal guide-books which contain only dry facts and figures. "My aim throughout," he remarks, "has been to benefit spiritually as well as to interest my reader, and I commend this book to the blessing of Him whose birth, life and death have lent to Palestine its unequalled and imperishable charm."

After leaving Glasgow, Mr. Ferguson went to London, and from thence to Paris, which he had never before visited, arriving on Saturday evening. Next morning, he says, "I felt somewhat out of my element, not only because I had no public duty to discharge, but also because I was a stranger among strangers, and especially because the sacred day is not respected by the Parisians as by us. I could sympathize to some extent with him whose spirit was stirred within him, 'Because the whole city was given to idolatry.' There is in Paris not only the idolatrous worship of the Virgin Mary and the saints, but also of fashion, and pleasure, and sin. Only the Sabbath before my arrival a kind of carnival had been held, designed to mark the approach of Lent. The fattest ox that could be found in France had been dragged on a high waggon through the principal streets of Paris. The whole city was turned out to see it. At length it was led to the Tuileries, where it was solemnly delivered over to the Emperor. The childishness of such a scene reminds us of the superstitions of pagan Rome."

As he walked through the streets of the gay city and looked on its grand buildings, its superb monuments and its teeming population, he did not think

of it as the scene of revolutions, bloodshed and barricades, but remembered he was treading ground rendered sacred both by historical and religious associations. "One individual," he observes, "was more sacred to me than all the heroes, royal, military, and ecclesiastic, who had figured there.

"Before leaving home I had been particularly interested in the memoirs of Madame de la Mothe Guyon. I had read extracts from her life by Professor Upham of America, at three of my Thursday night church meetings in the autumn of 1861. While unable to agree with her in her position, that complete sanctification is produced instantaneously by a single act of faith, I had no hesitation in holding up her consecrated and self-denying spirit as worthy of all imitation. Of noble rank, of great wealth, and a member of the Romish Church, this lady became deeply convinced that salvation did not consist in observing outward formalities and ceremonies, but in the surrender of the whole heart and life as a sacrifice to God. For this doctrine she suffered not only social but civil persecution through a long series of embittered years; and here I was in the very midst of the scenes which had been so familiar to her eyes and her mind. Here were the very streets on which I had read that she walked. Perhaps this was something like the elegant mansion in which she lived. Perhaps this was the very church in which the good man preached whose words were made such a blessing to her soul. Perhaps this was the very bridge on which a servant of God

one day stopped her, and delivered to her so appropriate a message that it seemed to fall directly from her Father in the sky. That was the site of the very Bastile in which she lay, but did not languish, for her Saviour's presence made her sing like a 'little bird' all day long. And certainly that was the very river Seine on which she sailed away from the rage of her conspiring enemies, and from the bosom of which her little girl gathered, with prophetic instinct, the osier twigs as they passed along, and wove them first into crosses, with which she covered her, and then into a crown with which she crowned her; for she said that, 'Mamma would first have the crosses, and then the crown.'"

Travelling by Lyons to Marseilles Mr. Ferguson left on Friday morning for Alexandria, in the steamship "Euxine," arriving exactly a week afterwards, where he found his brother-in-law, Major General Lang, waiting for him. This city, founded by Alexander the Great, has many attractions for those who desire to understand the workings of Providence and the history of our religion. Apollos, Clement, and the members of the Alexandrian School of philosophy, lived and flourished within its borders, and here, too, the great Athanasius and the heretic Arius had their fierce controversy as to the supreme Deity of the Lord. Mr. Ferguson remembered these great men when he viewed its curiosities and manifold objects of interest. Cleopatra's Needle was visited, as was the city's other great lion, "Pompey's Pillar."

“The Pillar,” he writes, “stands in the midst of the garish stones of the modern Mahomedan necropolis, and six hundred yards from the walls of the modern town, the statue towers aloft—so called, not from Pompey the Great, the rival of Julius Caesar, but from the name of the Egyptian who was employed to rear it. It was erected by the Alexandrians, A.D. 296, to testify their gratitude towards the conquering Roman Emperor Diocletian, for his clemency towards their city. Its shaft is evidently a single stone, hewn from the celebrated quarries up the Nile, whence, likewise, came the materials for buildings which can boast a much more venerable antiquity. It is of red granite, ninety-nine feet in height, by thirty in circumference. What changes, methought, have taken place around that silent pillar in the course of sixteen hundred years! Its apparent height is increased by the fact that it stands upon a piece of rising ground. It can be seen from many points in the surrounding country; and the sailor, far out at sea, shows to the thrilled traveller the classic land-mark of Pompey’s Pillar. The effect produced by this ancient monolith is spoiled, to no small extent, by the mud houses of a Mahomedan village, which stand in all their squalor, about a stone’s-throw from its base, as well as by the proximity of the burying ground. We were much annoyed during our visit by the pertinacity with which men, women, and children clamoured for bakshish. I could not fail to observe, again and again, throughout my tour, the ease with which adults in Egypt could beg from the stranger,

—a fulfilment of Ezekiel's prophecy—'It shall be the basest of kingdoms.'"

At Cairo, which was next visited, Mr. Ferguson attended public worship on Sunday morning in the Church of England, where he enjoyed the service, more particularly Cowper's fine hymn, "O for a closer walk with God," which was sung to the familiar tune "St. Stephen's," and in the afternoon went to the small chapel connected with the American Mission. Amid all the sights he saw, none touched him more than the grave of a friend of his youth, Dr. Robert Anderson. In writing of it, he says:

"We had been brought up in the same town in Scotland, had been educated in the same grammar-school, and had competed year after year in the same classes of the University of Glasgow. He had chosen the medical profession, while I had chosen that of the ministry. He had shone conspicuously as a classical, philosophical, and medical student, and had gained the high esteem and personal friendship of the first physicians in our city. As he was not very robust, he was recommended to avail himself of an opening at Cairo, where he was rapidly acquiring a first-class practice, backed by the powerful influence of the Duke of Hamilton, whose nephew was then British Consul-General of Egypt. But, alas! his sun went down before it was noon. Cholera manifested itself at Cairo in 1848, as it strode in its fearful overland route from India to Britain. Inspired by the enthusiasm of his profession, and being anxious to master all the symptoms of the disease,

Dr. Anderson actually sought out the destroyer and visited from house to house in the poorest parts of the city. Poor fellow! in a day or two he took ill, and after a few hours' suffering, died, to the great regret of all who knew his worth and early promise. It was with no little emotion that, after wandering about from stone to stone, I at length stumbled upon the following simple inscription on a neat marble monument:—‘In memory of Robert Anderson, M.D., of Hamilton, Scotland, who died 4th July, 1848, aged 23 years.’”

Resuming his journey Mr. Ferguson entered a boat on the Nile and in due time found his way to those objects of perennial interest to the traveller, the great pyramids of Ghizeh, which lift their gray summits to the sky nine or ten miles from Cairo. He ascended the pyramid of Cheops, having the usual adventures in the ascent and the imposition of the Arabs, who made loud and persistent demands for *bakshish*.

On reaching the top, “the view,” he says, “was undoubtedly magnificent and never to be forgotten. All lower Egypt was at my feet; the Nile, like a stream of silver, threading its own verdant valley—the minarets of Cairo sparkling in the sunshine—the desert of Suez stretching eastward, and the desert of Libya stretching westward, in brown and barren desolation. Not the least impressive sight was the immediate neighbourhood of the wonderful tower on which I stood—the other pyramids of the grand necropolis—the watchful Sphinx far below—and the

pyramids of Aboukir and Sakkara ten or twelve miles away, which, also, for many generations, had uttered their solemn *memento mori* to the world. I must confess, however, that the haziness of the atmosphere, caused by the glare of the sultry sun, somewhat narrowed the horizon; and my enjoyment was lessened yet more by my anxiety about the descent which yet lay before me. I observed that many travellers had cut out their names upon the flat summit, and, being ambitious of a similar memorial of my visit, I found to my regret that I had no knife with me. But here my guides were ready with the requisite instrument—only there must be more *bakshish*, and the sheikh must not be told, and the dragoman must not be told, for they were ‘non bono,’ ‘non bono,’—not good, not good. Nodding unresisting compliance, I scratched ‘F. Ferguson, Glasgow,’ on a stone, which I hope still retains the slender inscription.”

Returning to Alexandria the party turned their faces towards the once Holy City, travelling by Joppa and Ramleh, reaching Jerusalem after no little fatigue. The day after their arrival Mr. Ferguson felt so wearied that he rested all the forenoon, but being Friday he started in the afternoon to see the Jews in their Place of Wailing. He describes what he saw thus :

“ When we arrived, there might be sixty Jews and Jewesses on the ground chiefly advanced in life. They were standing in the narrow lane with their faces towards the much-loved wall. One venerable

old man was reading, in a loud and wailing voice, selections from Lamentations of Jeremiah and the Psalms. Every worshipper present had a copy of the Hebrew Bible, either in whole or in part. When the old man came to a specially affecting portion, the whole congregation broke out into loud mourning, wailing and amens. The word 'Amen' they repeated peculiarly. On the first syllable they hardly rested at all, but reserved all the emphasis for the second. Then the old man ended his readings and the lamentations became more general. Every one read his portion from the Psalms or the Prophets in a mournful tone, which affected me much. Their grief seemed to be sincere. Tears streamed ever and anon down their withered cheeks, and betimes they kissed the yet more withered stones of the temple."

On Sabbath he repaired to the Church of the Protestant Mission at ten o'clock in the morning, where it was expected the Prince of Wales, who was then in Jerusalem accompanied by the Rev. Dean Stanley, would be present. The Rev. Mr. Barclay was the incumbent of the church, he and Bishop Gobat doing duty alternately. The Prince arrived punctually, attended by General Bruce and twenty other gentlemen. Mr. Ferguson says, "He conducted himself with much propriety throughout the service, joining in all the responses, and keeping his eyes fixed upon the minister during the delivery of the greater part of his discourse. As I sat only two seats behind him I could observe that he sang to the tune of the Old

Hundred, every syllable of that hymn, the first two verses of which are as follows :—

‘Jesus shall reign where’er the sun
Doth his unwearied circuit run ;
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.

‘To Him shall endless prayer be made,
And princes throng to crown His head,
While infant voices shall proclaim
Their early blessings on His name.’”

Mr. Ferguson was also privileged to see another great Englishman in the venerable city, Mr. Thomas Buckle, author of the *History of Civilization*, whose work was then making a great stir among philosophers and historians. He describes him “as a tall, thin man, with light hair, and so plainly dressed that one would have taken him for a servant, rather than a wealthy traveller. His forehead was not prominent, but his eyes were deeply sunk beneath protuberant eye-brows, and the lofty dome of thought rose majestically above. He seemed to be in good health and spirits ; but judging from a likeness taken before his departure from England, and lately seen by me, he must have been reduced, when in the East, by the malady which had caused him to desist from his much-loved work, and seek reinvigoration in foreign travel. Probably what I thought to be the hue of health was only the superficial painting of the Arabian sun. An Englishman was his travelling companion, and on two little boys, who also journeyed with him, he lavished every kindness. At dinner,

although he sat at some little distance from me, I overheard his conversation, and observed his remarkable power of fascinating others by his table-talk, in which gift he is supposed to have rivalled even Dr. Samuel Johnson himself."

Mr. Ferguson remained in or near Jerusalem for about two weeks, visiting all the sacred shrines and places of historic importance. Unlike some who visit the city of David he was not disappointed by what he saw, though he had his doubts concerning the accuracy of what was said of most places which were associated with the life and death of the Lord. It was sufficient for him that it was the venerable city whose streets the sacred feet had trod, and that not far from its crumbled walls the Prince of Glory died. As he wandered in the eventide near the Gardens of Gethsemane and that of Joseph of Arimathea and looked up to the heavens, he remembered that the same stars which looked down calmly on him shone upon the Redeemer in His agony and on His tomb when His body lay in death waiting the advent of the third day.

"When," he writes, "we took our last look of Jerusalem, on Wednesday, April the 16th, our feelings might have been appropriately expressed in the exclamation of the Psalmist,—‘If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth ; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.’"

CHAPTER X.

1862-1863.

*Bethlehem—Sea of Galilee—Athens—Resembles Edinburgh
—Venice—Rhine—Confluence of Rhine and Moselle—
Home—Ministerial work—Weakness—Paris again—
Interesting friend—Switzerland—Geneva Cathedral
—Home.*

AFTER leaving Jerusalem Mr. Ferguson visited all the places of interest in the Holy Land. No pains were spared on his part in the endeavour to see every nook and corner that would enrich his mind with facts and scenes calculated to deepen his faith and enable him to be more useful as a preacher of the Gospel of Divine grace. He saw Bethlehem and marked the contrast between the lamp-lit and richly decorated cave where it is said Christ was born, and the plainness and poverty in which it pleased the Son of God to enter the world. Beside Jacob's Well he read John's account of the Saviour's interview with the woman of Samaria and offered up a short prayer.

On entering Nazareth he found the people enjoying a holiday in their own way, which was not altogether

pleasant to visitors. The house which is declared to have been the workshop of Joseph, the carpenter, was inspected, and with still more interest the synagogue from which Jesus was expelled, was visited. The Sea of Galilee was also an object which awakened deepest emotion, and for the time its physical features were forgotten in its sacred associations. "*He* walked on that expanse. *He* dwelt on that shore. *He* fed the multitude on yonder desert place. These thoughts completely filled the mind and drove for a season all the comparisons of mere outward beauty entirely away."

Mr. Ferguson describes this lake thus:—"The proportions of the Sea of Galilee bear some resemblance to those of Lake Windermere in England. It is about thirteen miles long, and at its widest part, namely, at its northern end, about six miles broad,—a breadth, I may observe, which the sheet of water I have just named does not reach at any portion of its expanse. Like that lake too, at no point can it be seen from end to end; for both at Gennesareth on the north and the emergence of Jordan at the south, its waters leave the straight line, and sweep round so as to form a figure somewhat semi-circular in shape. Tiberias lies about eight miles down the western shore. The atmosphere is so very pure that the distance did not seem, at first, to be half so great; but our experience as mariners proved that this estimate was by no means exaggerated. Looking northward from the town, we could distinctly see the break in the hilly

shore down which the sacred Jordan flowed. The eastern side of the lake was still "the desert place" it had been in the days of the Saviour. The mountains rose there to a considerable height, intersected at intervals by deep valleys, manifestly the beds of brawling winter torrents. But in truth desolation was stamped upon the western as well as upon the eastern shore. An oppressive stillness reigned all around; no signs of human habitation were to be seen as we sailed slowly along; and we could sympathize with Stephens, the eminent traveller, who, when he saw a solitary pelican floating at his feet, as he stood near the site of Capernaum, fancied that it looked at him with wonder, and that it asked him why he still lingered in the dreary solitude."

Cana, Mount Carmel, Tyre and Sidon, and Damascus were successively visited, after which Mr. Ferguson passed into Greece. Amid the ruins of Ephesus he meditated on the transitoriness of worldly greatness. When there he was anxious to see the place where the aged Polycarp was martyred, for his loyalty to his sovereign Saviour, but only saw some ruinous remains which tradition says mark the spot. As are most travellers, he was captivated with Athens, the first view filling him with delight. It reminded him most forcibly of the metropolis of his own country.

"I was much impressed," he writes, "during my first drive in Greece, with the great resemblance between the topographies of Athens and Edinburgh.

I had always taken it for granted that the Scottish metropolis was called 'Modern Athens' because, like ancient Athens, she was a world-renowned seat of philosophy and learning; but whenever I saw the Acropolis and the pillars of the Parthenon, I exclaimed, with not a little national pride and enthusiasm, 'The Calton Hill!' Then, on looking behind me, the Gulf of Ægina, running out to the Ægean, gleamed like the Firth of Forth expanding into the German Sea. The Piræus was like Leith; and further acquaintance with the sights in the vicinity taught me to call Lycobettus, Arthur's Seat; Hymettus, Salisbury Crags; Pantelicus, the Pentlands; besides other points of resemblance, more or less remarkable. Nor is the modern Athens behind her pagan prototype in point of literary power. Thousands of ardent students have flocked from all parts of the world, and have sat reverently at the feet of her Galileos, Galens, and Gamaliels. We may mention, without a blush, the names of Hamilton and Brown with those of Zeno and Aristotle; Jeffrey and Brougham will not disadvantageously compare with Eschines and Demosthenes; Scott and Wilson may be put in the balance with Sophocles and Euripides: while the religious greatness of Socrates and Plato is left in the shade by the Christian power of Knox, the reformer, Chalmers, the orator, philosopher, and divine in one, and the graphic Guthrie, the immortalized originator of the ragged schools."

From Athens Mr. Ferguson went to Trieste, Venice,

Vienna, Munich, and Mayence, taking great interest in their history, historic associations, religion, arts, and the condition, socially and religiously, of the people. Nothing escaped his observant eye, and in all that he saw and heard he was personally interested. At Venice he parted with his last travelling companion—Major-General Lang, and his niece having left him at Trieste.

Visiting, for the last time, some of the striking buildings of the Queen of the Adriatic, he returned to his hotel in St. Mark's Square after the sun had descended and darkness prevailed. The gloom, he thought, suited his state of mind better than the sunshine, for he was about to bid farewell to Mr. Feretti, who had accompanied him in most of his journeys, and to whom he was much attached. In his note-book he wrote:—"I felt very lonely as I packed up my little bag in the inn, and went out in the gondola to the steamer. On reaching it I sat down on the deck, knowing no one, and speaking to no one. I gazed upon the lights of the city, and thought upon the many centuries during which they had glimmered there on the brink of the deep, while the same stars overhead looked down upon the scene. Then the little vessel moved off, steamed slowly down the Grand Canal, and onwards into the Lagoon, when the light of Venice faded wholly from my view."

In descending the Rhine he was captivated with the noble river, its fine scenery, vine-clad banks, quaint towns and villages, and ivy-crowned ruins

of palaces and castles, with their wonderful traditions, which every now and then came in view.

The city of Coblentz attracted special attention, with summer palace, bridge of boats, and the strong fortress of Ehrenbreitstein, the Gibraltar of the Rhine. Immediately beneath Coblentz the Moselle joins the larger stream, and upon the marriage of the waters he gazed wistfully, and as he gazed he mused, and produced four stanzas on the confluence of the rivers. When writing of the silvery Moselle, he says :—

“Far from her source among the plains
Of gay and glorious France,
Where happy maids and gallant swains
Move in the mazy dance ;
Past sacred Treves her waters glide,
Nor cease to swell and shine,
Until they lose both name and tide
In the superior Rhine.”

Shortly afterwards he reached Hull, having sailed from Rotterdam, and from thence went to London. It was the time of the great Exhibition of 1862, and when visiting it he looked on the productions of the modern and compared them with those of the ancient world, being much impressed with the progress which had been made in science, arts, and industry, moralizing that never shall London sink into decay or the land whose proud metropolis she is, so long as her inhabitants remember the inscription on her Exchange: “The earth is the Lord’s and the fulness thereof.”

“I returned,” he writes, “to Glasgow the first week in July, having enjoyed a four months’ furlough. I

was kindly welcomed home by my congregation, at a public soiree, and was happy to find that during my absence they had enjoyed unbroken prosperity and peace."

Mr. Ferguson resumed his ministerial and pastoral work, carrying it on with considerable vigour. The members—who were scattered throughout the whole city, including many from rural parts—had increased to over seven hundred. This entailed no ordinary amount of labour in the way of visitation of the sick, funerals, marriages, and baptisms, the two latter in most cases taking place in private houses. Besides these duties, Bible class and week night service were held, and business meetings of deacons and the church. It required a strong body in addition to a well-stored mind to meet the requirements of such a position. The former, Mr. Ferguson did not possess, and his constitutional weakness was increased by the trials he had passed through, which told detrimentally on his heart and nervous system. He was troubled with giddiness of the head, which oppressed him when in an elevated position, as in the pulpit, and this ailment gave him no little anxiety and trouble. Sometimes he was so much depressed he could bear up with difficulty, and feared he must retire from his official position.

The office-bearers and members were full of sympathy for their beloved pastor, and were glad when, in the autumn of 1863, he received a cordial invitation to become the guest, for a short time, of an American family who were residing in Paris until the Civil War

in the United States, then raging, was at an end. These were the friends with whom he had travelled in Egypt and Palestine, and from whom he had parted so reluctantly at the hotel door in Venice.

The invitation was gratefully accepted, and Mr. Ferguson started his second Continental tour one beautiful night in August, and in due time reached Paris, crossing the channel from Newhaven to Dieppe. The latter place made him think of sturdy John Knox, who had frequently embarked and disembarked there. At a memorable time, 1559, Knox sailed from Dieppe on the 22nd April, and landed safely at Leith on the 2nd of May. "More potent," thought Mr. Ferguson, "was that landing of an unarmed minister than the expedition of many a bannered army. That was the visit that decided the downfall of the Papacy in Scotland. The cry, 'John Knox is come, John Knox is come!' sounded through the land, first as a tocsin of alarm, and then as a death-knell to both superstitions. Priest and prince alike grew pale when they heard that Scottish soil at length was trodden by the valiant Presbyterian. And he rested not till he had secured for us both Protestant rulers and a Protestant religion."

Arriving at Paris, he was welcomed by his trans-Atlantic friends, who did their best to make him feel as one of the family, and to view all that was of note in and around the city. On Sundays he attended the English and American churches, and, as he entered into the small places of worship, he thought of his own people at home, and in spirit was in the midst of them. In the afternoon of the first Sabbath he was

in Paris he was introduced to an interesting friend of the family, who was a good musician and employed her gifts in singing rare spiritual songs. This lady, he tells us, "was an American like themselves, and had come to Paris out of affection for the eldest of the trio. But since her arrival in France a peculiar, and certainly very commendable, taste had been developed in her. Moved by Christian compassion for the thousands of poor people who lived in the metropolis without religious knowledge and 'without God in the world,' she had devoted herself to the benevolent work of daily religious visitation. Every morning she went out with her Bible and her basket of cordials for the sick, and every evening returned wearied by, but not wearied of, her work. She was emulous to eclipse the Roman Catholic Sisters of Mercy, by doing the very duties which they did, but by doing them better. Possessed of a handsome fortune and of an attractive personal appearance, she had resisted tempting offers of marriage, that, married unto the Lord, she might do His work devoutly and well. All may not have the same vocation or the same grace given unto them, but such were hers. She thought that the single hand contributed to the 'single eye.' She boarded in the house of one of the French pastors, and was, in the best sense of the word, *une soeur religieuse*."

After sojourning two weeks in Paris, Mr. Ferguson saw an attractive trip to Switzerland advertised, and for a time hesitated whether he would take advantage of the opportunity and visit the country of Tell and

Calvin. At length he made up his mind, and sent a telegram to his friends in Glasgow that he would not return that week, as was originally arranged. With characteristic diffidence he says, "I felt culpable as a criminal while I was sending off the dispatch, for my church had borne long with me during my illness, and this was an unauthorised extension of my furlough."

The desire to see the land of the Alps was strong, and was gratified to the full. He saw Neufchatel, Berne, Interlaken, and Geneva. The last-named place had peculiar attractions for the traveller, and he lost no time in seeking them out. The lake, with its blue waters, filled him with admiration and astonishment. The junction of the muddy Arve and the clear, blue Rhone, which is immediately beneath the city, was looked upon with pleasure. "For some distance after the junction of the two," he says, "the pure waters kept by themselves, as if they repelled the impure and refused to mingle with them; but further down it was plain that the Arve, though in reality the smaller stream, prevailed over the Rhone, and communicated to his tide its own contaminating taint—a contamination from which he never recovers; for as he rolls through the departments of France, past Lyons and Avignon, and even to his mighty Mediterranean mouth, it is as a hopelessly embrowned and polluted flood." Looking upon the transformation wrought by the confluence, he determined to warn young people from what he saw, taking as his text, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers."

Mr. Ferguson soon found out the cathedral where Calvin preached with such power and success, and where the venerable Beza gave out, when eighty years old, the 124th Psalm to be sung on the day after the city's memorable deliverance from the Savoyards on the 20th December, 1602. He sat on the seat which was Calvin's, and beneath the canopy which three hundred years before had overshadowed the great reformer as he conducted public worship. The *Oratoire* where d'Aubigné and Gaussen preached was also inspected, as well as the church of Caesar Malan, a name honoured and beloved in Scotland.

From Geneva he returned to Paris, and not long afterwards joined his family, who were spending their holidays at the coast of Clyde. By this journey he felt himself strengthened in body, and greatly enriched in knowledge and material which could be employed in the service of the Gospel he loved to proclaim.

CHAPTER XI.

1865-1873.

Cheerful though weak—Death of Mrs. Ferguson—A colleague—Rev. Robert Craig, M.A., called—Call accepted—Preaching in other churches—Willingness to serve—Editor “Evangelical Repository”—History Evangelical Union—“Exposition of Parable of the Prodigal Son.”

THE pastor of a large city church is expected to appear Sabbath after Sabbath in the pulpit, largely before the same people, fresh and full of the unction of the Holy Spirit, though he may have risen from a sleepless couch, enduring the weakness which Milton says is ever the cause of misery.

This was frequently the condition in which Mr. Ferguson entered the pulpit after his sojourn in Paris and Switzerland. Strength did not come back as had been anticipated, nor did his nervous affection cease. He struggled on bravely, and did not murmur before his people, putting on a cheerful countenance and endeavouring to shed brightness, rather than gloom, over his congregation. “It would never do,” he was wont to say, “for me to bemoan my bodily weakness

before the congregation ; they all have their troubles as well as myself, and they come to the House of God to be lifted out of them, and not overwhelmed by those of others." In this spirit he ministered to his flock.

In the beginning of 1865, a dark cloud passed over the home, in the death of his wife and the mother of his children. Few trials come to a minister or any other man greater than this. She had been for eighteen years the sharer of his joys and sorrows—the one to whom alone he could fully open his mind without fear of being misunderstood. Out of the troubles of his church life he could go to her, and by the sympathy and love she bestowed upon him, the cloud was made to burst with blessings on his head. She was taken away, and he was left in the midst of his family to mourn her loss. He did so with Christian resignation, bowing before the mystery of death and of Providence, believing it was all well with her, and that, with God's blessing, her memory would encourage him still to serve the best of all Masters. There were six children, two of whom died in infancy—Fergus and William. Those who survived at the death of their mother were Sophia, Fanny, Fergus, and Charles Finney.

It was seen that if Mr. Ferguson's valuable life was to be prolonged and his service to the church retained, he must be relieved of the constant pressure of work. The office-bearers consulted the members, and asked them to consider the advisability of having a colleague and successor. Knowing that Mr. Ferguson was willing to have a co-pastor, they agreed at once

to look out for a suitable person who would efficiently fill the office.

Their choice fell upon the Rev. A. M. Fairbairn, Bathgate—now Principal Fairbairn, D.D., Mansfield College, Oxford—who could not accept the call owing to the special studies in which he was then engaged. An invitation was then given to the Rev. Robert Craig, M.A.—now Rev. Dr. Craig, Edinburgh—who had just finished his studies with *éclat* at the Glasgow University and the Evangelical Union Theological Hall. Mr. Craig accepted the invitation, and the joint pastorate was continued for twelve years with success. At that time the church members numbered eight hundred. There were four Sabbath schools, with nearly nine hundred scholars; three Bands of Hope, with about six hundred members; and all departments were in a flourishing condition. Mr. Ferguson shared the work with his colleague, wrought pleasantly with him, and rendered him all honour and praise.

The benefit of the rest soon manifested itself in restored health and increased vitality. Physically and mentally his recuperation was discernible to himself and his friends. So soon as it was known by other churches that he had only one sermon to deliver each Sabbath in his own church, and that he was able to do more, he was besieged for special sermons in the city and suburbs.

The suspicions regarding his heretical doctrines had all, to his joy, been dissipated, and no preacher was more fully welcome to other pulpits than Fergus Ferguson. Wherever he appeared he drew crowds

to hear him, "and then," he said, "I have an opportunity of preaching the Gospel to all classes and conditions of men."

He used to say: "One of my weaknesses is, I cannot say 'No' to another minister who asks my services when he does so in person. I could do so by letter, but not if asked face to face. I am sure in these circumstances to yield, and then I have to do penance to my kind deacons, who are so solicitous about me not doing extra work, on account of my health." Speaking on the subject afterwards, he said:—"I have preached in churches of all denominations. For many years I could say, like the late Dr. Norman Macleod, that my book was filled from October till April for evening sermons in churches of almost all Protestant bodies. Nay, I could even go beyond him, and say that during the summer months also, my engagements on Sabbath nights continued in evangelistic halls, seamen's Bethels, and ordinary churches."

Without doubt, Mr. Ferguson loved this itinerating preaching mission among the churches of all denominations. It suited his Catholic spirit, and pleased his love of standing well with his fellow-Christians, whom he honoured for their work's sake. Nothing pained him more than to be separated from others who owned the same Saviour, read the same Bible, and hoped at last to dwell in the same heavenly home. It was, therefore, with emotions of gratitude and gladness that he saw the walls of theological misunderstanding, which in the beginning of his ministry

separated him from other Christians, crumble before the power of Christian charity and be reduced to dust. This process, which had been going on for years, was greatly accelerated by the obliging, unselfish spirit which he, on all occasions, displayed. Of the changed conditions of his relations with all evangelical bodies he took advantage, and became their helper and co-worker in every good work. This continued all through the remaining years of his life.

In the year 1869, at the urgent request of the Rev. Dr. Morison, Mr. Ferguson assumed the editorship of *The Evangelical Repository*, a quarterly magazine of theological literature, the first number of which appeared in 1854. Dr. Morison had been its editor from the first, but, owing to his devotion to other studies, felt it necessary to place it in the hands of another. He selected Mr. Ferguson as one who, from his theological and historical knowledge, popular and fascinating style, and faithfulness to the doctrines of a liberal evangelical theology, for the defence and exposition of which it was established, was capable of making the magazine successful. By the manner in which he discharged his duties as an editor he justified the choice.

In the second number he commenced "The History of the Evangelical Union," which he carried on in successive numbers until it was finished. It was afterwards issued as a volume, and gained a large circulation. The history is not written in a formal, strictly literary form; it is discursive, annotated,



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supplemented, and racy. It contains the main facts, stated in a popular manner, and gives sketches of the leading men of the denomination, which cannot fail to enable the reader to form a right conception of what manner of men they were.

Mr. Ferguson also gave a brief history of the Congregational Union of Scotland in the pages of the *Repository*, and contributed articles of varied character, which kept the pages instructive and lively. He was assisted by a good staff of contributors, who wrote for the love of the cause of which the quarterly was the organ, and whose productions were suitable for the times, some of them for all times. The editorship was largely a position of honour, and was carried on with tact and ability to 1886.

Notwithstanding the numerous calls made upon him for work, both by uttered and written speech, he still found time to issue a volume now and then when he thought he could advance the interests of morality and religion.

Throughout his whole life, like most New Testament readers, he was captivated by the parable of the Prodigal Son, declaring he fully endorsed the statement of one of the fathers of the Church, who said, “It was worth Christ’s while to have become incarnate and live on the earth if for nothing but to tell that wondrous story, which reveals so fully what God is as a Father, and man is as a wayward child.” To the study of this parable he devoted himself more than once, and in 1873 wrote and

published a volume of about two hundred pages, containing "A Homiletic Exposition." The opinion he had formed of the value of the parable he expresses thus:—

"If John iii. 16 and 1st Timothy i. and 15 have been the most useful of Scripture texts, the Parable of the Prodigal Son has been one of the most useful of Scripture paragraphs. If Romans iii. 19-31 has ever been esteemed by scholars as the *locus classicus* for the display of the righteousness of God, Luke xv. 11-32 has ever been regarded by evangelists as the *locus sanctus et fertilis* for the display of the love of God. It has arrested the attention of sportive children to divine things, and has held out a staff for the spiritual support of tottering old age. It has afforded great and conscience-condemned transgressors a ground of hope, and has charmed the censorious and austere into charity and love. It has helped teachers to still the tumult of the Sabbath school, and has often proved an appropriate text to the benevolent visitors of prisons and penitentiaries. The minister in his conference room has found an infallible specific for resolving the doubts and difficulties of inquirers, as well as for allaying the fears of the dying when he stood in the chamber that is solemnized by approaching death. It is common and yet holy ground, on which Christians of all creeds and denominations may meet; for, after they have fatigued and wounded one another in the unending battle of dogma, they may call a truce and say, with a smile of conciliation, 'At any rate,

we can all agree on the Parable of the Prodigal Son.'"

Mr. Ferguson possessed special aptitudes for the homiletic exposition of the suggestive and graphic words of the Lord, and employed them with great poetic taste and spiritual penetration. "The chapters are written," as a critic said, "as with a pencil dipped in light as well as in love, and by one who must have been near the feet of the Master when he penned them."

CHAPTER XII.

1874.

Visits America—Henry W. Beecher's sermon—Talmage—Prayer meeting—Philadelphia—Declaration of Independence—Meeting friends—Washington—Frederick Douglas—Pittsburg—A Levee—Springfield—General Assembly Cumberland Presbyteries—Sermon before Assembly—Lecture on Scotland.

THE love of travel which was strong in Mr. Ferguson was once more gratified by a request to accompany the Rev. Dr. Morison to the United States of America to represent the Evangelical Union of Scotland at the General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, which was to hold its sitting on the third week of May, 1874, at Springfield, Missouri. Previous to this he had corresponded with some of the leading divines of that body and had frequently contributed articles to their denominational newspapers and periodicals; therefore being well known, as was also Dr. Morison, it was certain a warm welcome awaited the deputation.

Further reasons which weighed with both pastor and office-bearers were, that it would give Mr.

Ferguson rest and change and enable him to see some of the brethren scattered abroad, who originally belonged to Blackfriars Street congregation or other churches associated with it. The prospect was alluring and he was more than ready to undergo all the fatigue of travel to accomplish the end in view. In addition to this, he felt it an honour to be the companion of such a renowned theologian and exegete as Dr. Morison, to whom he was willing to act as Boswell did to Johnson.

They started on their journey on the 24th day of April, and after a fairly good voyage reached New York on the 8th May. Friends met them at the landing stage and gave them a warm welcome. They were received with gladness wherever they set foot on American soil.

New York was diligently explored and every day those were met who had known and heard them preach in the old country. They sought out Plymouth Church and were fortunate in hearing Henry Ward Beecher on both a week night and Sunday morning. The sermon on Sunday was a plea for Christian liberty, and was one of extraordinary power and eloquence. Mr. Beecher's text was, "Yet show I unto you a more excellent way." In the course of the sermon he said, "If Paul were in the United States to-day he would say, 'Episcopacy is good; Presbyterianism is good; Independency is good; Methodism is good; Baptism is good; even Popery for some states of mind is good; and yet I show unto you a more excellent way.'" On reaching the part of his

discourse, dealing with Presbyterianism, he held up a copy of the Westminster Confession of Faith, exclaiming, "Yes, it was to get liberty from the third chapter of that book that I became an Independent." "At which," says Mr. Ferguson, "Dr. Morison was deeply moved, for it was the very book by which he had been 'weighed in the balance and found wanting.'"

In the evening he went to Dr. Talmage's Tabernacle, which was filled by an audience different from that of the morning. He gives a pen-and-ink sketch of this popular preacher as he saw him on that occasion.

"Dr. Talmage," he wrote, "is rather above the middle size, and as his hair is fair he is one of those men as to whom you cannot tell whether he is thirty-five or fifty years of age. His forehead is not very high, but his eyes are sunk so deeply behind his fair eyebrows as to leave the impression upon the beholder that his mind is penetrating as well as imaginative. Dressed in a black surtout and black necktie, he had nothing on the large platform with him but a plain little chair, a very little table on which he rested his elbow while the hymns were being sung, and a very little Bible in his hand—smaller indeed than the copies of the Scriptures which were being used by many of his congregation."

The sermon was simple, earnest and powerful, different in many respects from that heard in the former part of the day in Plymouth Church, the contrast reminding Mr. Ferguson that "there are

diversities of gifts but the same spirit, and there are diversities of operations but it is the same God who worketh all in all."

The prayer meeting which followed the service was attended by one half of the audience, and was conducted in a somewhat novel fashion. Dr. Talmage, after prayer had been offered, gave an address, at the conclusion of which he asked, "Is there any one here who has been impressed to-night, and is willing to rise up in his pew in token of that impression?" After a pause one rose, then another and another, the doctor exclaiming: "Two!—yes two!—Three, thank God for three!" and so on for some time, concluding with the words, "I am about to give you a last chance." Mr. Ferguson looked on the scene with a kindly eye, thinking the evangelical "Going, going, gone" might result in keeping those who stood up from sin, and delivering them from temptation during the week.

Leaving New York, the travellers went to Philadelphia, where Christian friends again met the party and gave them a real Scotch welcome. Mr. Ferguson selected for his temporary home one of the large hotels, the arrangements of which were, to him, matters of curiosity. The visitor's book and the way it was inspected by those who hung about the hall, attracted his attention, and he soon discovered that the more particular travellers were in giving their name and address, the more certain was it that they would see themselves figuring in next day's paper. Dr. Morison, desiring as much as possible to

avoid publicity, always wrote his name and Scotland only in the visitor's book. Mr. Ferguson wrote his name and address immediately after, and in doing so frequently embraced the opportunity of adding D.D. to Dr. Morison's on the line above. Of this he never acquainted the doctor till they had returned to Glasgow, and no harm accrued from this exercise of his desire to do honour to his friend.

Among the places visited was the Independence Hall, where the celebrated Declaration of Independence was adopted, and where Benjamin Franklin and the leading spirits of the Revolution signed it in the month of July, 1776. The famous historical document is exhibited to visitors, and the part of it read, with profound interest, is that which declares all men are created equal; "that they are endowed by their Creator with certain invaluable rights, and that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Mr. Ferguson remembered, as he read these words, how often they had braced the energies of those who sought to abolish slavery, and how they had fired the hearts of the brave soldiers who fought for the unity of their country, its freedom and prosperity, during the civil war. They are an echo of the spirit of the teachings of Jesus and of the declaration His apostle made on Mar's hill to the philosophers of Athens.

After seeing various places of note in Philadelphia, including Dr. Albert Barne's vestry and church, Mr. Ferguson went to Baltimore, where he sought out Mr. Andrew Muirhead, a late member of Brighton

Street Evangelical Union Church, Edinburgh, who received him with peculiar delight, showing no little kindness.

One of the most cheering things in connection with his visit to this city were those he met whom he had been the means of blessing when they were in the mother country. A captain taking him by the hand said, "My wife was a member of your church. Do you not remember marrying us in South Portland Street, Glasgow?" Another asked him, "Do you recollect coming to Edinburgh on the October fast day in 1847? You preached at 11 a.m. in Brighton Street Church, and your subject was, 'The Gospel as announced by the angel to the shepherds at Bethlehem!' I found the Saviour under that sermon, and I have cleaved to Him ever since."

These testimonies greatly affected Mr. Ferguson, leading him to remark, "Little did I expect when I cast the bread of life on the waters on these occasions, to find it at Baltimore in the State of Maryland after so many days."

Washington was the next place to which he directed his steps, where he was accompanied, and received, by Evangelical Union friends, the latter being overjoyed on seeing the two preachers whom they admired, and who in their early career in the ministry had suffered so much in the cause of a free and full Gospel. These Christian friends were bound to one another by ties closer than that of country, and were, though far from the churches of the denomination they had originally belonged to, deeply

attached to them and their ministers—Evangelical Unionists at home or abroad being clannish; and this impressed Mr. Ferguson more forcibly than ever when he was in the United States, and particularly so in the city of Washington.

The Capitol was first of all inspected, a building of imposing architecture, and worthy of the great Republic; then the Congress was seen, and the White House, where President Grant resided. One personage of importance visited was Frederick Douglass, who was superintendent of a bank where coloured people deposited their savings. "I intended," writes Mr. Ferguson, "along with my friend, to pay respect to the celebrated defender of his own once enslaved race. I found him looking old, but still vigorous. He impressed me as being a man of power. He remembered being in Scotland very well, when the cry 'Send back the money!' was sounded loud and long in the ears of the Free Church, because they had taken £3,000 from the slave-holding States of America in aid of their own Disruption movement. I reminded him that I had travelled with him outside a coach from Perth to Glasgow in 1846. Mr. Douglass repeated to me a verse of a parody on the song 'My boy Tammy,' which had been addressed at that time to Dr. Thomas Chalmers. It was as follows:—

' Whaur hae ye been a' the day,
My boy Tammy?
Whaur got ye thae bawbees,
My boy Tammy?

Did ye get them on the braes
Whaur grow the thistles and the slaes,
Or 'mang the tears o' slavery's waes,
My boy Tammy?'"

Crossing the Alleghany Mountains, Mr. Ferguson went to the city of Pittsburg, Ohio, where there are nearly five hundred factories of iron, steel, glass, oil, copper, and wood. The atmosphere was dense with smoke, and the impurity made him cross the river to the city of Alleghany, which lies on the slope of a hill and looks down upon the toil, the dust, and noise of the mother city on the other side. He preached on Sunday evening in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church on a favourite text, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." Here, once more, he was struck with the number who gathered around him at the end of the service, who had heard of or known him before. He had to hold something like a spiritual levee at the foot of the pulpit stairs. One young man pressed through the crowd, and, shaking his hand warmly, asked, "Don't you remember me, Mr. Ferguson? I not only sat in your church, but sang in your choir more than a year." A lady and gentleman were specially welcomed, because they had known him when a boy. "I cannot tell you," said the lady, "with what interest I have listened to you to-night, for I was at school with your sister in the town of Hamilton, and I remember the day when she left school ill with the weakness of which she died." Others had their story to tell

of an impulse to a holy life received years before when they attended the services he conducted when a mere lad. Such incidents as these "taught me," he says, "never to be sorry when certifying honest Christian people to American churches, for they assuredly become missionaries, and propagate the Gospel, both by lip and life, in that mighty land which will yet play such an important part in the world's millennium."

After leaving Pittsburg he went to Cincinnati, where he embarked on the steamer "Pat Rodger," and sailed on the Ohio river to Evansville, and from thence went by train to Springfield, where he reached the goal of his long expedition of nearly six thousand miles. The welcome he received along with Dr. Morison was cordial and enthusiastic. He says, "If our hands were made weary our hearts were made glad." On Sunday, according to his usual custom, he was determined to see and hear all he could, and attended no less than four public services.

Next day he and Dr. Morison were formally introduced to the General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church by its leading theologian, the Rev. Dr. Beard. They were received by the whole Assembly rising up, "an act," says Mr. Ferguson, "which was as thrilling as well as an impressive one; and although not a word was spoken at that time, nor a cheer given, there was to us in that very speechless uprising a welcome more cordial than words or hurrahs could have conveyed." He

was afterwards called upon to address the reverend court, which he did in his usual genial and felicitous manner, evoking enthusiasm which threatened to become oppressive. The address concluded with a few impromptu lines which he had made on the origin of the Cumberland Presbyterian denomination. In these lines he speaks of the rivers of the country, and states his preference for the Cumberland, concluding the whole with the verses:—

“America! the free,
Home of the bold and brave,
What blessings were prepared for thee
Beside that humble wave!

“’Twas there the chains were burst
By which God’s grace was bound;
And there, for all whom sin had cursed,
Salvation free was found.

“Therefore of all the streams
That journey to the sea,
The storied Cumberland—it seems
The loveliest to me!”

On the evening of the same day Mr. Ferguson preached before the Assembly, to a densely-crowded congregation, choosing as his subject “The Graces,” a subject which afforded him an opportunity of exhibiting in an attractive manner the all-important connection between justifying faith and a holy life. The discourse was greatly appreciated. He describes two remarkable scenes which were enacted before he left the building. “One dear old man,” he says,

“threw his arms around my neck, and kissed me in true Christian affection—a salutation to which, in the circumstances, I did not at all object. The second greeting was hardly less remarkable. The minister of the church in which I preached and his wife—the latter an interesting lady of a refined and spiritual countenance—were standing at the door when I came out. Putting a hand on each shoulder, she gently turned me round till the light of the lamp which was burning in the lobby fell full on my face. After having intently contemplated my countenance for some seconds, she added, apologetically, ‘You must excuse me, dear sir, for the liberty which I have taken; but I have received so great a blessing from your sermon that I wish to have your face imprinted upon my memory as long as I live.’ This certainly was one of the most graceful compliments and one of the most heart-felt testimonies of gratitude I ever received.” He characteristically added, “Let me be pardoned for the apparent egotism in recording these things.”

The pardon is granted, for by such little things the personality and characteristics of the man are made known. They gave fragrance to his life and intercourse when he mingled with living souls on earth, and they have not lost their aroma, but rather increased it, now that he has ascended.

Before he left Springfield, Mr. Ferguson was presented with a request, signed by the leading citizens, to deliver a lecture on “Scotland and the Scotch,” and tendered the City Hall for that purpose. To this he

could not say no, and the lecture was delivered before the elite of Springfield, a captain of the army taking the chair. When he resumed his seat he had a perfect ovation, being covered with bouquets of flowers, flung from all parts of the hall. This is quite an American fashion, and is the outcome of both large hearts and refinement.

CHAPTER XIII.

1874-1877.

Alton — Strawberry feast — Lincoln — Detroit — Meeting friends — Home — Second marriage — Degree D.D. — Formation Dennistown Church — Removal Montrose Street — Sermon on leaving — Mr. Craig's removal to Manchester — Question of colleague — Assumes the whole pastorate.

THE main object, for which the journey to the United States was undertaken, having been accomplished, Mr. Ferguson considered how best to reach the place for embarkation. After consideration, he determined to visit St. Louis, where he had friends who would be delighted to see him. Alton was the next place to which he went, and he elected to do so by steamer on the Mississippi River. He had seen the junction of the Rhone and Arve, the Rhine and Moselle, and he was desirous of seeing the two greatest and longest rivers in the world made one. The two rivers were not unlike those of Switzerland, for the one was limpid, and the other muddy. Mississippi means "The Father of Waters," and is clear, but "although the word Missouri is somewhat euphonious to our ears, the Indians did not intend it to be an honourable name, for it means the 'River of Mud.'"

At Alton, Mr. Ferguson attended a Strawberry Feast in connection with the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, where a large number of young people was assembled, and delivered a characteristic address in which his mingling of mirthful and serious added to his love of punning was conspicuous. After a few words of introduction he said :—

“Suppose that there are two ladies named the *Misses Happy*. Well, they become acquainted with a lady called *Miss Soury*. Now the problem is, whether will Miss Soury be made happy by her new friends, or will she make them sour, as the Missouri makes the Father of Waters muddy? As happiness is in the case supposed, in the relation of two to one, we would expect a good result, but evil is wonderfully infectious and often carries the day. Yet in a Christian Church the great antidote to sour temper and impure dispositions was to be found. God was infinitely happy, and He wished all men and women to partake of His holy happiness—such a Christian gathering as that before me would surely contribute to true and everlasting joy. Surely no Miss Soury could survive amid such strawberries, and sugar, and cream! All the *Misses* that *sipped* them would, we expected, be in heart sweet, and the gentlemen, too, since they had met under the auspices of a Christian Church.

May every maid with honeyed lippy,
Be pure and clear like Mississippi ;
And oh, ye men, they won't endure ye,
If ye be muddy like Missouri.”

Our traveller was touched with tender feelings when he passed Springfield, Illinois, where the noble Lincoln lived, and where he earned the designation of "Honest Abe." Eighteen miles further on he was carried in the railway car to the city of Lincoln, where he was cordially received and generously entertained by Colonel Latham, the chief proprietor of the place. The day of arrival was Decoration day, when throughout all the States the graves of those who fell in the civil war are visited and covered with flowers. The ceremony is simple, but impressive, and calculated to enter into the minds of the young as seeds which cannot fail to produce a rich harvest of patriotism. A soldier carrying the Stars and Stripes leads the way, followed by little girls dressed in white, with flowers and immortelles in their hands which they place on the graves of the fallen brave. Mr. Ferguson was glad when informed there was no distinction made between the fallen soldiers of the north and south,—both were honoured. "Time," he observed, "gradually softens down the harshest asperities, and death levels all rancours as well as all ranks."

In due time Chicago was reached and explored, and from this noted place he sailed on the Lakes Michigan and Huron to Detroit, where he and his companions were joyfully received by a company of the old country people. "It became," says Mr. Ferguson, "an Appii Forum to us, for the brethren were ready to receive us. 'I am from Galston,' said Mr. Paton; 'and I am from Kilmarnock,' said Mr. Robertson;

‘and you have been in my uncle’s house in Auchterarder,’ said Mr. M’Ewan. ‘We are so glad to see you; we have been impatiently waiting for your arrival, for it is advertised that you are to preach in a Congregational Church to-morrow.’”

This he did to an overflowing congregation.

After visiting Niagara, passing through Canada, he reached New York, where he was again entertained by numerous friends, setting sail for home on the 24th April, 1874. The voyage was stormy and all amusements on board were suspended, most of the passengers having to remain below. When Queens-town harbour was reached, there was great excitement among the passengers, and many a letter and telegram were sent to friends informing them that the sea had been crossed in safety. Mr. Ferguson was thankful once more to see Irish soil, and a week afterwards he was in his own home in Glasgow, much refreshed in the inner and outer man by his tour in the Western Republic.

On the 24th September of the same year Mr. Ferguson married, as his second wife, Miss Mary Anne Russell, daughter of Mr. James Russell, Edinburgh, a deacon who along with others opposed the expulsion of the nine students from the Congregational Theological Hall. Miss Russell was a member of the Rev. John Kirk’s church, and was in full sympathy with his theological views and the cause with which both her pastor and future husband were so closely identified. In entering his home she brought with her strength, inspiration, and sympathy. Once more

Mr. Ferguson felt he had been guided in his selection of a companion who could make the home a place of rest and social intercourse. The aid he required was lovingly given, and by reason of it he was enabled to take upon himself the full share of his pastoral and public duties.

Another gift came to him shortly after his marriage, in the shape of the Degree of Doctor of Divinity. Mr. Ferguson always delighted in study, and after leaving the University he returned twice to his Alma Mater to increase his knowledge of languages and make himself more fit for special service. The first time he went to the Hebrew Class taught by the amiable and scholarly Professor Weir, in order that he might be efficient as a tutor of the Hebrew Class of the Evangelical Union Theological Hall, which he had been asked to conduct for a session. The second time was with a view of fitting himself to undergo the examination for the degree of Master of Arts, which he received in 1857. His degree of Doctor of Divinity was given in 1874 by the Cumberland University, Lebanon, which dates from near the beginning of the century and has a full staff of professors and hundreds of students. He had become known as a ripe scholar and theologian to the Senate of the University by his writings, some of which had been published in the United States, as well as by his contributions to the journals of the Cumberland Presbyterian denomination. The honour was received with gratitude, and it never was more worthily bestowed. Marks of respect of this kind bring with

them obligations, which in this instance the recipient was fully able to discharge to his own credit and that of his Cumberland Presbyterian friends.

The church under the dual pastorship continued to increase, and for the third time was able, without injury to itself, to separate sixty of its members to form a new church in Dennistoun. For a season Mr. Craig and Dr. Ferguson watched over the infant cause, and the financial responsibilities were taken by the mother church. It grew under their fostering wing, and eventually called the Rev. William Arnott, then in Lanark, to the pastorate, who has gathered around him a devoted people, built a handsome chapel, and has in its membership the promise of a large and useful church. Dr. Ferguson, as before, felt no regret at losing so many from his fellowship, but, on the contrary, was delighted to see in the north-east end of the city a new centre of evangelical influence. To the end of his life he watched over this ecclesiastical daughter with fatherly regard, preaching one of the anniversary sermons every year, attending social meetings, and cheering by word and presence his ministerial brother in his works and ways.

Railways have created revolutions both in country and towns. There are few places in the land which they have not invaded, with their smoke and noise, in some instances marring the beauty of the landscape and making hallowed scenes profane. Glasgow has not escaped, and under their sway the old College in the High Street has been turned into a prosaic

station, and where students were wont to study ancient lore, the shrill whistle of the engine and the voices of guards and porters may be heard. The College of young Ferguson is no more, and the invader laid ruthless hands also on his church, which was located near the lower end of the College Green. In 1875 the Union Railway bought up the whole of Blackfriars Street, and the Congregational Church among the rest of the buildings, for which, however, it must be said, a high price was given. Early the following year an excellent church in Montrose Street came into the market. It was at once secured, and has been occupied as a place of worship ever since.

Leaving the old place of worship where he had had so many joys, difficulties, and successes was a trial, but he felt it was as a call from heaven. On the last Sabbath the church met for public worship, both pastors preached appropriate sermons. Dr. Ferguson took for his text the words of the Lord to His Apostles in Gethsemane, "Arise, let us go hence" (John xiv. 31), and gave a review of the church's history and the cause they had for gratitude notwithstanding the difficulties they had had to encounter. After pointing out some of these in the course of the sermon, he proceeded to say:—

"My health also became much broken, and people often said to me, 'You should leave that church, and seek an easier place.' I may here observe that during these thirty-one years I have been frequently sounded as to whether or not I would accept a call to other and eligible fields of labour; but, although in some

instances, I confess, I had a struggle in my mind, I always concluded to discourage the proposal, and chiefly because I could not hear the Saviour addressing me distinctly in the words of the text, 'Arise, and let us go hence.' For you know, if He did not go with me, it would be of no use to go; and, further (although, perhaps, it was egotistical in me), I was always afraid lest the church should suffer by my leaving, and perhaps go down. So, here am I to-day, in God's good providence, having clung to this building during all these thirty years; and now the call is very clear and decided: 'Arise, and let us go hence.' Suppose we were to make a procession from this house to that which we are about to enter, of all those who survive and have remained with us since 1845, it would be a very small company indeed. I think I could almost count upon my ten fingers all those who would walk in such a procession. Twice ten, at any rate, would include the whole number. Perhaps you are surprised at this, and are ready to ascribe it to the fickleness of our original adherents. You would err, however, in coming to such a conclusion. For, in a great and shifting city like this, very few of the original members are to be found after the lapse of thirty years in any community, literary, political, or ecclesiastical. For consider, in the first place, to how many the call has come from heaven, 'Come up higher,' or, in other words, to how many the blessed angels sent by Jesus have said, as they lay upon their dying beds, 'Arise, and let us go hence.' O, how many sick beds

and funerals your ministers have been called upon to attend! How crowded this church would be this morning if they and they alone were here! I seem to see them occupying their old pews—the old, grey-headed deacons who stood at the treasury the day the church was first opened, whom very few here remember, and the more aged sisters who soon sickened and died. Then those who grew old in the course of years and have also passed away; then those who departed in middle life, or little past it, honoured, useful, and respected; then a great multitude of youths and children whom we have buried, and who fell victims to consumption and the other diseases which hold high carnival in a great city like this. These alone would fill this church to overflowing. The blessed angels of Jesus said to them all, ‘Arise, and let us go hence’; and we may imagine their immortal spirits, newly released, as flapping their bright wings and rising joyously to the many mansions on high. And if it be given to the heavenly inhabitants to know what transpires on earth, may we not suppose that to-day they will be deeply interested in these farewell services in Blackfriars Street Church, which they regarded on earth as to them a Bethel, the very House of God, and the very gate of heaven.”

Two years after the removal, the Rev. Robert Craig, M.A., co-pastor, received a call to a Congregational Church, Manchester, and saw it to be his duty to accept the invitation. The question as to whether they should call another colleague was

brought before Dr. Ferguson, and his opinion was asked regarding it. After consideration, he came to the conclusion that it would be better for the church in every way that he should take upon himself the whole duties of the pastorate, which he was willing to do. His health was now generally better, and he felt himself justified in undertaking the public services of forenoon and afternoon, and an occasional evening lecture. Moreover, he found that in undertaking the full charge he could concentrate his energies more systematically than hitherto, as when partially free from work they had been scattered in assisting others. Besides, he had no love for copastorates, and thought it an advantage to both minister and flock that there should be but one shepherd to whom they could look for instruction, comfort, and advice. With these views, he thought it advisable to offer, if the office-bearers and members were agreeable, to resume his old position, and be once more sole minister of his much-loved ecclesiastical family. The plan was cordially approved of, and, as a token of their appreciation of his willingness to undertake the full oversight of the church, the members raised his stipend to £500 a year—a large sum in those days among Congregational churches.

With renewed energy and determination, Dr. Ferguson set himself to make Montrose Street Church a place for the conversion of sinners, the edification of saints, and fit to be a worthy successor of the old church of Blackfriars Street.

CHAPTER XIV.

1874.

Temperance—The pledge taken—How treated at the University—Aided organizations—Temperance tale—Given the muse—A writer's opinion—His hymns—An incident—"The napkin"—"On the death of Livingstone"—"Zion birth place souls."

THE temperance movement is one with which the body of Christians to which Mr. Ferguson belonged was most closely identified. Without any law or ecclesiastical restraint, its professors, ministers, students, and ninety-five per cent. of its members were total abstainers, and also what would now be called "Local Vetoists." They believed that abstinence from alcoholic liquors was the duty of the individual, and that the State should by the strong arm of the law prohibit the making and selling of strong drink.

This conviction was forced upon them by their knowledge that alcohol is a poison, that its use produced intemperance and all its destructive progeny, that the drink traffic was the main source of much of the drunkenness which disgraced the country, was the enemy of religion and retarded the progress of the

people socially, morally, and economically. So strong were they in holding these principles that they would not admit into the fellowship of their churches the holder of a license to sell intoxicants, believing that his trade was not in harmony with, but against the genius of Christianity and the teachings of the Lord. These views were not sentimental fads, but sincere and solemn convictions for the holding of which they had in some instances to suffer insult and misrepresentation.

Dr. Ferguson early espoused the temperance cause, taking the pledge, along with his father, when he was fourteen years of age, from the hands of Robert Gray Mason, one of the first lecturers who was sent from Lancashire to advocate the claim of abstinence in Scotland. In an address delivered in Aberdeen on "Christian Life and Temperance," Dr. Ferguson said :

"I had the honour of being in the sessions 1838-39—almost in my boyhood—one of the first total-abstaining students in Glasgow University; I was looked upon as a kind of monstrosity fit for a place in the College Museum. Even the learned professor of Latin when translating at the second hour one of the plays of Plautus, when he came to the words *libere aquam*, instead of giving them the ordinary rendering, 'to drink water,' made a bow to me, a mere boy, and translated them 'to become a teetotaller.' Of course the class laughed and every face was turned towards your humble servant. But I have often been proud since of that bow and that slight persecution. And in truth several of my most promising fellow-students, to-

whom I was in the habit of looking up as models of scholarship and ability, would have been much the better of the new habits which were then so much derided. The greatest mathematician of the time sleeps in the bed of St. Lawrence, into which he flung himself in a fit of *delirium tremens*; while the gold medallist in classics and logic died at a public infirmary, a homeless wanderer, through alcohol."

Dr. Ferguson devoted much of his time and energy to the advancement of the temperance enterprise. He was a member of most of the public organizations instituted to influence men to abstain and Parliament to pass laws to restrict and destroy the influence of the liquor trade.

A loyal member of the Scottish Temperance League, he was never absent from its annual meeting when his duties and health allowed him to be present. At the request of the directors he wrote one of their "Pictorial Tracts" in 1873, which bore the title of *The City of Liquordom*. It is a characteristic production, and exhibits his popular power of teaching by allegory. He likened Liquordom to a strongly fortified place guarded by seven forts, which, if he could take, would place the city under his power, and the weary warfare would be at an end. He proceeded to bring his guns of argument and his weapons of appeal to bear on the stronghold, concluding thus:—

"Then I thought that, as on that memorable Sabbath day in the close of January, 1870, when the people, standing in the *Place de la Concorde* in Paris,

saw the French flag taken down and the German banner hoisted in its stead, in like manner I saw the black piratical standard of Alcohol taken down from the citadel of Liquordom, and the twin flag of Temperance and of Christ exalted in its stead—the white emblem of temperance and the blood-red emblem of the Lamb, their folds finely interblending, and making a harmonious two-in-one. And I heard the blessed angels singing aloft, as on Immanuel's natal-day, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men.' "

The Permissive Bill was also advocated by Dr. Ferguson on the public platform, and he frequently assisted the Association which in Scotland seeks to promote the cause of prohibition. On one memorable occasion he was the hero of the evening on account of his speech, more especially its conclusion. After arguing in an earnest and powerful manner that the people should have the power to say whether they desired public-houses in their localities or not, he surprised and raised his audience to a fervour of excitement by bursting out into a song or parody on "There's nae luck about the house," which he adopted to the absence from the House of Commons of Sir Wilfrid Lawson who had that year lost his seat for Carlisle. "There's nae luck about the House when Sir Wilfrid is awa.'" The speech and the song were long remembered, Dr. Ferguson remarking next day, "Remembering some wise man had said, 'Give me the making of the ballads of a country and I will give you the making of the laws,' I thought I would vary

the proceedings and make the verses while the other speakers were delivering their addresses."

In 1874 Dr. Ferguson published a "Temperance Tale," which had been written at the request of the Good Templars, to which organization he belonged. The title is *Not Found Wanting*, and was the first book of the kind he had ever attempted. It was written in the hope that the "tale might be at once entertaining and useful, in which an acute young logician, fresh from one of the Universities might be represented as replying to objections argued by his prejudiced fellow-townsmen against total abstinence and temperance organization." The scenes introduced are almost wholly founded on facts which came under the author's observation, and they are described in a genial and touching manner. The work, however, is not worthy of the versatile writer, and is an illustration that there are limitations to the most genial minds, and that the power of writing tales does not always accompany scholarship and literary ability. He became conscious that his powers did not lie in that direction, and did not again attempt anything elaborate in the sphere of fiction.

From an early age Dr. Ferguson devoted himself to the muse, and the producing of verses betokened a gift of song which placed him in the category of the minor poets of Scotland, a large and interesting class. Ever and anon he delighted his friends and audiences with poetic productions which were varied in character, some being grave and others gay. Not

infrequently he closed his sermon with an embodiment in rhythm of the ideas it contained, and at social gatherings he frequently charmed his hearers with impromptu versification which related to the circumstances and the place.

A writer in a sketch of Dr. Ferguson contained in *Modern Scottish Poets*, says, "Were the whole of his rhymes gathered together they would fill a considerable volume; apart from their poetical merits they would delight a large circle of readers by their quaintness, their humour, and their aptness to the occasions for which they were produced. But the worthy Doctor would be the last man to think of such a compilation. With the genuine simplicity and unconsciousness of a child crooning a song to itself as it sports on the green braes, Dr. Ferguson strings his rhymes for his highly appreciative audiences, and then allows them to pass away from his memory, never more to be recalled." Others who heard them were not so easily satisfied and took many of them down as he uttered the words, and preserve them as treasures which keep his memory living and his influence perennial.

Among these productions are some hymns, two of which are well known, much loved, and have had a place in all editions of the Evangelical Union Hymn Book. One was composed in 1846, and is on private prayer. It is devout and comforting, suited for either public or private worship. There are six verses, the first, fifth, and sixth are as follows :—

How sweet to the believer's soul
The place of private prayer,
Where he can all his burdens roll
On God and leave them there.

Teach us, O Lord, to leave with thee
Each soul's depressing load,
To feel ourselves made light and free
By rolling all on God.

Waiting the day that shall disclose
Our Father's dwelling place,
Where thrones of glory wait for those
Who loved the throne of grace.

A better known and more popular hymn is on the words of Paul, "He loved me and gave Himself for me." This has been sung with great fervour for the proclamation of the Gospel, and has been the means, by the blessing of God, of imparting spiritual blessing to many. There is not much of what can be designated the poetic element in the verses. They are too decidedly theological to admit of that, but this lack is made up by the evangelical spirit which throbs in every line. The three verses out of the five which reach nearest the perfection of hymn composition are the first, fourth, and fifth.

He loved me and gave Himself for me,
Amazing love, amazing sacrifice,
I'll take my harp down from the willow tree,
And bid its notes in praise to Jesus rise.

He loved me and gave Himself for me,
And surely I myself to Him will give,

None, Jesus, will I ever love like Thee,
And to Thy glory only will I live.

O when I stand 'mid yonder shining throng,
And on fair Canaan's coast my Saviour see,
I'll add this chorus to my swelling song,
He loved me and gave Himself for me.

The author had many testimonies of the influence, for good, this hymn exercised over those who heard it. One instance he delighted to narrate which occurred in Panmure House, the property of the Earl of Dalhousie. A Dundee mill-owner took the house on a long lease, and to put it into proper repair employed a number of workmen to whom, when they had finished their work, he gave an entertainment. The rule was, that when the eatables were disposed of, every one present should either sing a song or tell an anecdote. It came to the turn of a young man who modestly declined and insisted that he could neither sing a song nor tell a story. All present pressed him to perform his part, and refused to let him off. Being thus solicited, especially by the host, the young man stood up and with a subdued aspect of countenance, yet with a clear and melodious voice, sang the hymn, "He loved me and gave Himself for me." When he reached the last verse, which was rendered in a tender, joyous spirit, the effect produced on those present was as deep as unexpected. The host, who was a religious man, perceiving the effect of the sacred song, asked that it should be repeated, which it was with even greater spirit, the outcome being that it was heartily

agreed on the part of all present, at the host's suggestion, that the rest of the evening be spent in hymns and prayer. Next day the young man wrote out several copies of the hymn, for both drawing room and kitchen, and for weeks the servants might be heard singing at their work in all the rooms and corridors of Panmure House,—“He loved me and gave Himself for me.”

As a specimen of the verses with which Dr. Ferguson sometimes closed his sermon, the piece he repeated when preaching on John xx. 1-10 on Sabbath, the 4th August, 1870, may be given. It is entitled “The Napkin.”

I found a napkin in my Saviour's grave,
He left it there the day He rose to save,
It wipes the tear from every weeping eye,
And stanches blood that might for vengeance cry.
'Tis fragrant with the odorous perfume
With which His holy body filled the hallowed tomb,
And strangely on its border bears my name,
I cannot tell how there the writing came.

O yes! I see it—out of purest love,
My name and His He finely interwove,
His needle was a nail of Calvary's wood,
The thread was purpled by His sacred blood.
But I must tell you something stranger yet,
Like the five loaves before the thousands set,
The napkin may be multiplied to-day,
And all may bear a precious pledge away.
See how they fall like snow-flakes from above,
O lift by faith a guerdon of His love,
Each one will find his name upon the hem,
Coupled with Christ's and marked ‘Jerusalem.’

Dr. Livingstone was looked upon by Dr. Ferguson as one of the great Christian heroes of the century. As recorded, he knew him as a lad, had watched his noble and independent career, had corresponded with him when in Africa, and had loved and honoured his parents. When the great traveller died and his body was brought to this country by his faithful African servants and deposited in Westminster Abbey, he wrote a few verses on the occasion which have not been printed. They are worthy of a place in the story of his life.

“ Build me a hut to die in,
Is all I ask of man ;
A lowly place to lie in,
To end my little span.

“ Thence shall my weary spirit
Mount up to Jesus’ breast,
And through His grace inherit
An everlasting rest.”

They built him a hut, and laid him
Upon his lowly bed :
Did all they could to aid him,
Until his spirit fled.

And then, his dust they bore it
O’er mountain, stream, and plain,
And bade yon ship restore it
To Britain’s coast again.

Pour out your thousands, London,
To take the precious trust :
From sunrise unto sundown
Gaze at the glorious dust.

Then open wide the Abbey,
Reserved for noblest men,
The warrior, and the rabbi,
Made great by sword and pen.

“Prepare the traveller’s mansion,”
I hear them say in heaven,
“Let it have wide expansion,
No stunted room be given.

“It was a mere Africa shealing
In which he breathed his last,
Give him a glorious dwelling
When all his toils are past.”

I see him in the glory,
With his father and his wife,
Rehearsing all the story
Of his eventful life.

And listen to me, as I trace
The great man’s heavenly words—
The whole of Africa’s race
Shall soon become the Lord’s.

Dr. Ferguson attended the laying of the Memorial Stone of the New Zion Chapel, Kendal, 1896, and was much interested in the service. In the evening he delivered a fine address on a favourite subject, “Zion the birth-place of Saints.” He composed a number of verses suitable to the occasion, of which the last three ran thus:—

May they who wander to far distant climes
Remember well the soul-refreshing times,
And often say to children God has given,
“Yon church in Kendal was the gate of heaven.”

May those to glory gone look down to earth,
And bless the place that gave them heavenly birth,
And ask the angels on their upward way,
“Were sinners born in Zion Church to-day?”

And when the Lord Himself shall count and write,
And all the triumphs of His grace recite,
May He declare, as loud Hosannahs roll,
“Yonder was born full many a precious soul.”

CHAPTER XV.

1875-1881.

Visits North of England—George Muller—"History Evangelical Union"—"Life of Christ"—"The Character of God"—Its style—Author's theology—Views of future punishment—Practical preaching.

THE calls made upon the time and energies of ministers are diversified and numerous, in proportion as they are popular and esteemed. Dr. Ferguson had been a popular preacher from the beginning of his ministerial life, and his name and fame were not confined to his own denomination or to the city of his habitation. In the year 1875 he spent a week of hard work in the North of England, where he had been most unexpectedly called, which may be taken as a sample of the labours he was ever and anon invited to perform. In his notes on the week's work he says:—

"We have so much to do in this great city that I am very unwilling to leave home. I can easily say 'No' to a letter, but when two gentlemen present themselves in one's house, stating that they have travelled 230 miles with the express purpose

of asking a favour, it is very difficult to refuse them. The brethren to whom I refer came all the way from North Shields to beg me to give them one of the Sundays which they had fixed upon for the opening services of the new Temperance Church in that town. The deputation stated that they had full sympathy with the Evangelical Union, and that two of their number—namely, the minister and one of their principal people—had attended the last Conference meetings that they might be able to report to the church what they had seen and heard. My esteemed colleague and our deacons being quite willing that I should go in the circumstances, I gave my consent, and accordingly found myself on Saturday, the 15th of May, crossing the Tweed at Berwick, and about two hours afterwards landing at Newcastle, on the ‘coaly Tyne.’

“It often happens that if you grant an inch you must give an ell; and so it turned out, from one friend telling another, that the original agreement about two sermons on the Sunday had expanded into the following pretty respectable programme:—A lecture on Palestine in North Shields on the Monday night; a sermon in Ryton Congregational Church on Wednesday night; and, lastly, a lecture on America in Dr. Rutherford’s church in Newcastle on Thursday night. You thus see that our English friends were determined not to allow my talents to rust for want of exercise.”

In every place visited he was gladly received, and his audiences were large and appreciative. When

in Newcastle he had the opportunity of hearing George Muller, of Bristol, for the first time, and this he recognized as a reward for the sacrifice he had been called upon to make by leaving his church and home. Mr. Muller preached in Brunswick Place Wesleyan Chapel, and Dr. Ferguson describes the service thus :—

“We found the large chapel crowded. I was greatly interested in this distinguished man of God—‘the Lord’s dealings’ with whom have been so remarkable. He is tall and commanding in appearance. He speaks with a slight German accent; and although he told us that he was now in his 70th year, he spoke with so much force that he was easily heard over the whole of the large building. His text was 1st Tim. i. 15-16; and, as might be expected, he told us not a little about his own conversion, which was as sudden and, in some respects, as remarkable as Paul’s. ‘Why have I left Bristol,’ he exclaimed, ‘to come on this preaching tour, although I have a church there, requiring much attention, with 1,100 members? Because I wish to publish abroad how happy I am in God, now that I am 69 years of age. Once, young men, my heart was in taverns, and theatres, and gambling-rooms; but now I would not enter one of these places for ten thousand sovereigns. And why? Is it a sacrifice to me not to go there now? No. My heart is in heaven, and in its holy joy.’”

During the mission he was cheered by the testimony that not a few received spiritual blessing

from his ministrations. At the close of one meeting he says:—

“I had the privilege of conversing with three individuals ‘whose heart God had touched’—one of them seeking the Lord in tears, and two babes in Christ—young men who had found the Lord on Sunday.”

In closing his narrative, he writes:—“I returned home to Scotland on Friday the 21st, thankful that I had been enabled to do a little during this journey for the cause of Christ and for humanity.”

Notwithstanding his numerous engagements, he continued to reach a larger circle by means of the press. For a number of years he had contributed, quarter by quarter, chapters of a History of the Evangelical Union to the pages of the *Evangelical Repository*, and in 1876 they were issued in a volume, which in some respects is the most important production he published. The volume is about four hundred pages, and its contents consist of the lives, doctrines, works of the ministers, and history of the churches and institutions of the Evangelical Union, a religious body which has done much to liberalize theology in Scotland, and lead its inhabitants to think more scripturally concerning God and the work of His only begotten Son. The History of the Evangelical Union, in its early stages, is the history of theological contentions and controversies. Dr. Ferguson was in the midst of them all, not a spectator, but a hero in the strife. This doubtless has given colour to his historical setting of events and his characterization of the actors in the

scenes described, but no one who understands the facts as they occurred will charge him with being too severe on his theological opponents and too lenient to his theological allies. By way of explanation he writes in the Preface :—"It is possible that at certain points of the narrative the reader may be inclined to think that the author has been tempted to indulge in a severity of style, not in harmony with the spirit of harmony and love for which he has pleaded. In self-defence he would say that it is very difficult to write the history of theological controversy in which one is personally concerned without sometimes manifesting warmth of feeling ; but certainly, if in any instance that warmth has degenerated into acerbity, it was not intended by the author, and he begs it will be overlooked."

Few will find fault with the spirit of the author, whose genial nature is apparent throughout his work, and who with historical narration and biographical sketches interblends his own thoughts and reflections. He wrote for the people, and succeeded in producing a popular account of the origin and progress of one of the remarkable Scottish ecclesiastical and theological movements of the century.

Dr. Ferguson's next work was *A Popular Life of Christ*, which he gave to the world in 1878. In the course of his ministry he expounded the four Gospels twice, the first time with minuteness, and the second time with more care, and also more briefly. The result of his studies was embodied in the volume named, a work not designed for scholars, ministers, or

such as had had access to, and could benefit by, the productions of Neander, Farrar, and Geikie, but "specially for those who had not enjoyed the advantages of a liberal education." There was still room, he thought, notwithstanding the numerous Lives of the Saviour which existed, "for a book which would narrate in simple style and orderly course the main features of the grandest life that ever had been lived on the face of the earth."

He adds in the Preface, "Having enjoyed the privilege several years ago of visiting the Holy Land, I have been enabled, I trust, to give more graphic delineations of the scenes among which the Saviour spent His life, and especially the days of His public ministry, than could have been penned by one whose whole information had been derived from books." The special knowledge possessed he uses successfully throughout the volume, and his descriptions of persons and places are such as to arrest and interest the mind of the "common people." In each chapter advantage is taken of the incidents recorded to add a few practical homilies, and on account of this feature the volume might have been appropriately designated "A Homiletic Life of Jesus Christ." Though it cannot be said that it throws new light on the wonderful career of the Son of Man, it enables the reader to follow Him from the manger to the cross, and finally to the ascension, helping him to understand the words of the evangelists, and to realize more fully the influence of Christ's life, words, works, suffering, death, and glory.

Another volume of a different description was

published by Dr. Ferguson in 1881, entitled *The Character of God*, one of a doctrinal series, written by various authors, expository of the views held by the members of the Evangelical Union. This is the only treatise on systematic theology he wrote, and the subject is one which touched on many of the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith. "If a man's views be right on the character of God," he writes, "he will think correctly on the Divine Fatherhood, on Sin, on Atonement, on Regeneration, Predestination, the Freedom of the will, the Holy Spirit's work, and all affiliated points." "The subject is a most comprehensive one, and one that draws deep into the very foundations of theology."

To the task he bent his energies and performed it *con amore*, putting his whole heart into the subject. That he has been altogether successful cannot be affirmed, for, like all men, he had his limitations, and systematic theology was not pre-eminently his forte. He was too poetical, imaginative, and practical to be a master in this department of sacred study, and had employed the popular style of thought and manner of speech too long to excel in the more severe task of systematic and scientific exposition of doctrinal themes. In the volume referred to he had not gone far when he left the logical and formal style of demonstrating the love of God in creation and adopted a parabolic style. For so doing he apologizes in a foot-note, in which he says:—"The author begs here to offer, not indeed a word of apology, but simply of explanation. When he commenced this chapter he had not the

intention of gliding so fully into the parabolic or narrative style of composition, but simply of representing himself as one who had been brought suddenly to believe in the goodness of God by means of the marks of love which appear in creation, the Bible, and the incarnation. When at length he found himself fairly into the imaginary vein and detailing fancifully the experience of another, he put no bridle to his pen for a chapter or two, remembering how frequently the Saviour of the world instructed His audiences by parables."

The author, however, forgot that his Master did not teach His hearers systematic theology, but uttered words to all and sundry, which revealed truths the theologian had to work upon until he arranged them into a doctrinal system. The parabolic style is illustrative and popular, the theological, logical and scientific. The former is most valuable to the preacher, the latter is essential to the teacher.

These remarks are not intended to depreciate the value of the volume on *The Character of God*, but to point out the characteristics of Dr. Ferguson's mind as a thinker on divine things and an expounder of the Scriptures. Being engaged, it may be said, every day of the week in dealing with those who required consolation and direction, warning and teaching, he gradually eschewed the severely doctrinal, and devoted himself to the practical, caring less for theology than religion, for the dry bones of a creed, than for the truth which brought with it spirit and life.

Still, he had another side, a dogmatic side, and held firmly to the system of doctrine he thought most in harmony with the teachings of the holy men who wrote the Scriptures as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. The theology he was taught when young was never departed from. It was that of Dwight, Dr. Wardlaw, and Moderate Calvinists generally, modified by the views of Dr. Morison and Dr. John Kirk. As to distinctive doctrines he was an Arminian, not a Calvinist—a believer in Morisonianism as distinguished from Moderate Calvinism. When a student he closed his mind on certain fundamental doctrines, which were not, to any appreciable extent, modified by after-consideration. The supreme deity of Jesus Christ, the vicarious nature of the Atonement, the universality and resistibility of the Spirit's work, were doctrines he held with a firm grip. The vicarious nature of the propitiation of Christ was to him dearer than life; and modern thought on the subject, as represented by Dr. John Macleod Campbell, Maurice, and Bushnell, only made him cling more tenaciously to the theory of Gilbert, Wardlaw, and Morison, so far as the latter had expounded it. The Gospel as understood by these divines he found was the power of God unto salvation; and, by its proclamation, mostly in Scriptural language, had led the sinner to love the Saviour and walk in newness of life. It was therefore the sword of the Spirit to be employed in slaying the enmity of the human heart and in the destruction of sin.

If it had not been for Dr. Ferguson's strict adherence to the forms of thought rendered sacred because they were those of his spiritual teachers, and had been proved to be powerful in bringing those afar off near to God, he would probably have extended his mental horizon, and reached conclusions useful to many who could not accept the orthodox exposition of some important doctrines. Not infrequently he had glimpses into regions which, if followed, might have thrown light on what sorely perplexed inquiring minds. Now and again, on the spur of the moment, he would utter sentiments of this nature, but immediately seemed to shrink from what they implied, and hesitated to accept the validity of his own insight.

One instance may be given as an illustration. At a meeting of ministers, an essay was read which touched on the doctrine of future punishment. When examining what was advanced, and as if thinking aloud, he asked,—Why did Jesus Christ, the most loving and best of beings, speak of future punishment more decidedly than other inspired men, declaring that the worm never died and the fire was never quenched? Why did the Saviour of men so speak? In answering his own question, Dr. Ferguson said, in substance,—It was because He was so pure and tender that He realized most vividly all that was involved in sin, and the dreadful havoc it wrought in the human soul. A pure, cultured lady, for example, would describe the social and moral condition of the slums in more vivid terms than would be employed by persons

who were just one remove from slum life, because she understood its degradation more perfectly. The holy alone can estimate the sinfulness of sin, and only the righteous can form anything like an adequate conception of the punishment meted out to those who are unforgiven. On this principle, Christ, of all beings who trod the earth, understood most accurately the turpitude of iniquity, the penalty which is its due, and the wretchedness it entailed on its victims; and, viewing it with His pure eyes, would describe its terrible results, although to those experiencing them they might not be as a burning flame and a gnawing worm. "Am I wrong in my imaginings?" he asked; adding, "I hope I have not, by throwing out such suggestions, been departing from what is written on this awful theme in the sacred Word?" With this half apology, he resumed his seat, and was evidently afraid he had gone too far in a direction which was not safe or generally accepted.

Latterly, Dr. Ferguson kept steadily in the sure paths, and did not treat of doctrine in his sermons so much as in the early part of his ministry. The minds of the people had changed, and what he preached and prayed for was a changed life in all who professed the name of Christ, declaring the fact of the Atonement more than descanting on its nature, and seeking to elicit faith rather than to expound it psychologically.

No opportunity was allowed to pass without his inculcating the necessity of holiness and the higher

life. The contents of the volume just mentioned bear this out most fully. Having in nineteen chapters set forth the character of God, the author writes, in concluding his work :— “I recollect that when I was a student of Moral Philosophy in the University of Glasgow, the late Professor Fleming had been lecturing on ‘Natural Theology,’ and had quoted the distinction in the attributes of the Deity. He had not quoted Scripture, but a raw country student, who, if he had not shining ability, was deeply pious, went beyond his preceptor. While reading an essay called forth by the business of the class, he remarked, ‘It is never said in the Bible by God, Be ye omnipotent, for I am omnipotent, or, Be ye omniscient, for I am omniscient; but it is said, Be ye holy, for I am holy.’ This quotation produced a powerful impression on his fellow-students, for the Word of God is quick and powerful everywhere. I have had my eye on that essayist ever since. He is now a useful and respected minister of the Gospel. I take advantage of the incident in bringing my treatise to a close, and beg my readers to imitate habitually all the communicable attributes of God ; for ‘without holiness no man shall see the Lord,’ and every man that hath the hope of heaven in his heart purifieth himself even as God is pure. In one view of the matter, Love, but in another Holiness, includes them all.”

CHAPTER XVI.

1882-1884.

School Board—Re-election—"The Patriarchs"—Its contents—Attitude to higher critics—Doubts—President of Evangelical Union—His services to the denomination—Rev. A. Wilson's testimony—Presidential sermon.

It was thought advisable that the Independent denominations of Glasgow should be represented at the School Board, and they looked for one qualified for the position who would unite the party and be its worthy representative. The eyes of many turned to the pastor of Montrose Street Evangelical Union Church, who, on being approached, yielded with some reluctance to the solicitation to be named as a candidate for the election of 1882. Dr. Ferguson was cordially supported by many outside as well as those inside the denominations who had put him forward, especially those friendly to temperance and moral reform, and was elected, being far up in the poll. He entered upon the work of the Board with spirit, and did splendid service during his term of office. His attendance was regular; and though he always imagined he had no aptitude for public business, he

was surprised to find that he could undertake a full share of the various duties devolving upon the members of the Board. The teaching of temperance and religion in the schools had his special attention. On more occasions than one he moved for and got returns showing the temperance lessons the children were taught in the various schools, and the number who were members of the Bands of Hope. He was also an examiner of the religious instruction, a work for which he was peculiarly qualified. In 1885 he was elected for a second term of three years, and served till 1888, when he retired on the pressure of the office-bearers of the church, who thought he was over-taxing his strength. This step was regretted by many, and partially by himself. The work performed was, to him, not a toil, but a pleasure and relaxation which took him out of himself, his constant environments and associations, and gave him a pleasant change of society, which is always invigorating. Such influences would not have caused him to preach worse, but better sermons, had he been encouraged to continue a member of the School Board. The deacons and others of his flock thought otherwise, and he was ever ready to fall in with what he knew to be their kindly desire.

In the year he was elected a member of the School Board he published a large volume entitled *The Patriarchs: their Lives and Lessons*. In preparing the work he had no intention of producing an elaborate book in which would be discussed the profound and intricate questions which occupy the attention and studies of critics and expounders of the early books of

the Old Testament. The aim he had in view was "to give just a kind of paraphrase of the narrative in Genesis, a little more extended than that of Doddridge in his *Family Expositor* of the New Testament, with all the additional light which geographical and archæological details supply. Difficulties have not been slurred over, but fairly met; while the best authorities have been consulted and advantage taken of their remarks."

One of the outstanding features of the book are the homiletic remarks which are here and there inserted, and the evangelical colouring which pervades the descriptions of the persons and deeds of the fathers of the Jewish race. Some of these are viewed as types of Jesus Christ, this mode of treatment being vindicated by the words of Paul, "Now all those things happened unto them for examples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Cor. x. 11). The quaint remark is added, "A man may not claim to be a Bunyan altogether, and yet may be allowed to allegorize a little." Certainly, and this volume is all the more useful that its pages contain some things which would not put the Immortal Dreamer to shame.

In the General Introduction to the volume on the *Patriarchs* Dr. Ferguson's attitude to the theories of the higher critics is apparent. He was certainly no heretic as to the historicity, authority, and inspiration of the Bible. In regard to these doctrines he was, from the first, a conservative theologian, and the more modern critical works did not modify his convictions.

The Bible was received as the Word of God, which could not be broken, and he accepted its testimony as he thought Christ did when He dwelt among men. The traditional views he firmly entertained even after he had read and studied some of the most able productions of the most erudite members of the critical school. For example, he believed in the Mosaic authorship of the first four books of Scripture, looked upon Genesis as a historical book, and Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, not as legendary characters, but as real men whose lives and words are recorded in the sacred page. He writes:—"Just as in the case of the Gospels, certain oral traditions, or even documentary records, invested with apostolic authority, were probably the basis of the four Gospels, which we owe to four distinct authors, so in all likelihood, Moses, when he wove into one consecutive story the wonderful book of Genesis, was indebted to documents more or less voluminous which had been preserved among the children of Israel, the oldest of them dating from the earliest postdiluvian times. While we admit to this extent that there may be something in the documentary theory as proposed by the eminent physician, Astruc (1753), we by no means give in to inferences which such writers as De Wette, Ewald, Kuenen, and others have drawn from it, namely, that in Genesis and the whole Pentateuch we see traces not only of divers documents, but of documents which are irreconcilable and contradictory, the one of the other. We see no real contradictions in the Pentateuch, when difficult passages are particularly and candidly ex-

amined, without any preconceived bias of mind. We maintain that not only did Moses, under the guidance of God, select here and there, possibly from pre-existing documents, what was truthful and to the point ; but that he obtained direct from Jehovah sublime revelations consistent only with the highest degree of ecstatic inspiration ; and that, besides, he was led to weave the whole into a narrative of marvellous continuity and distinctness of aim."

This is a fair statement of the traditional—and what also may be termed the Church view of the origin of Genesis, and in this Dr. Ferguson rested. It is by no means a baseless view, but one for the truthfulness of which much important evidence has been advanced. Those who hold it are termed orthodox, but we daresay occasionally have doubts and fears awakened by the great names of profound scholars who are on the other side.

Sometimes clouds of doubt crossed over Dr. Ferguson's mind, for he had his days of darkness, when even a star did not appear in the sky. On these occasions it seemed as if the foundations were giving way, and that no light came from heaven to guide the traveller to the rock of truth. After reading a volume which was strongly on the side of unbelief, he asked a ministerial brother :—"Have you read that work, and what impression did it produce on your mind ? Do you really believe in the Bible as inspired and infallible, in miracles, and particularly the resurrection of Christ ?"

Being assured that the book in question was not so formidable as it appeared at first sight, and that there

was a greater difficulty in not believing in Christ's miracles and resurrection than in believing they took place, he said :—" I have had my doubts, and they come to me when I am fatigued with work, and make me weaker in body and soul. But in these moments I have just to fall back on Jesus Christ and prayer, and leave myself in His hands."

"The best thing that we can do," was the reply ; "He who is the Light will impart light and lead us into all truth."

Little do hearers know the dark thoughts their pastors have, in secret, to battle with, concerning the deep things which pertain to the kingdom of heaven, and even the existence and character of God. Such a warfare is the experience of every sincere servant of Jesus Christ whose heart is in the work of endeavouring to meet the wants of those he ministers to. It was the experience of Fergus Ferguson, but of it he spoke but seldom, and that only to those who were likely to have passed through the like valley of the shadow of death. The struggle and the darkness generally brought strength and light, the compensation ultimately being more than the suffering.

During all the time that Dr. Ferguson was a member of the Evangelical Union he was amongst the foremost as a popular preacher and speaker, a worker in the several spheres of denominational activity, and a brother beloved. He was elected President of the Annual Conference in the year 1853, when the number of the churches was small

and the Union in all departments was in an infantile condition. In 1884 the denomination had greatly increased; its influence had extended, and the brethren desired to manifest their esteem for him by once more calling him to the Presidential Chair, which was the highest honour they could confer. This was done with much enthusiasm, and gave satisfaction to the whole brotherhood.

No one could deserve the honour more than Dr. Ferguson, for none had served the Union with greater devotion, acceptance, and goodwill. He was much sought after for anniversary services and special sermons, and never refused when he could possibly comply with the request. Wherever he went he drew large congregations, and always left a good impression behind. By his utterances and deportment he strengthened the hands of the pastor, deepened the sense of responsibility of the office-bearers, and cheered the members, making them more zealous in duties pertaining to the advancement of the cause of Christ. At social meetings he was a special favourite, his address being generally looked forward to as the chief one of the evening. It contained things grave and gay in closest proximity—one moment the remarks would set the audience into a fit of unrestrained laughter, and no sooner had this subsided, than the most solemn appeal would be made regarding the spiritual condition of those present. In this style of speaking his peculiarity lay, and there did not seem to be the slightest incongruity in the different kinds of speech. Indeed, the



ABOUT SIXTY-FIVE.

breaking up the emotional nature into a smile or laugh was preparing the soul for the reception of the good seed of the kingdom which was sown immediately afterwards.

Sometimes, however, he did not secure the attention he desired, and this was keenly felt.

At a soiree held in a small church in Lanarkshire, for example, he failed to arrest the attention of those present, who were largely composed of young men and women. It was Hallowe'en, and they were not in the mood to listen to a minister of the Gospel. When he rose he was received with great applause, and took for his subject a favourite topic, "He brought me to His banqueting house and His banner over me was love." Before he had gone far in his address a number of the audience became restless and continued to be so until he resumed his seat, which he did sooner than usual. When the meeting was over he took himself to task for what he thought was a failure on his part, and in the prayer before retiring earnestly sought forgiveness for the imperfect way he had that night presented the mercy of God to those addressed. All such imagined failures were deeply deplored; he was most sensitive in regard to them, but they were not numerous during his long career. In a communication from the Rev. Alexander Wilson, who had many opportunities of seeing and hearing Dr. Ferguson at social and other meetings, the writer says:—

"It might naturally be supposed that in consideration of his position, combined with his peculiar

gifts and qualifications, Dr. Ferguson would be much in demand among the churches for special occasions. And he was. No one was more sought after and everywhere he was welcomed. His anticipated presence at a soiree drew an audience. 'Young Ferguson is to speak' was quite sufficient to bring a crowd in my early student days, and when he lived to be Dr. Ferguson and an old man it was still the same. For one thing, his speeches were strongly flavoured with the salt of Attica, and that generally suits the public taste. He was a man of 'infinite jest' and of most excellent fancy, and was skilled in the art of blending the grave and the gay in his addresses so as to make them exceeding attractive as well as instructive. No one knew better than he how to speak 'within the limit of becoming mirth,' and he spoke likewise, such apt and gracious words, that aged ears played truant at the tales, and younger hearings were quite ravished, so sweet and valuable was his discourse. This was always characteristic whatever the social function might be, a church or temperance soiree, an ordination dinner or a public breakfast, the annual gathering of Quarrier's Homes or the opening of a church bazaar. The result was invariable. He could not speak even in his most serious discourse without emitting at least some gleams of humour, and when occasion afforded him a little more scope his humour flashed and played in many a harmless stroke and lit up with a sweet fascination the thought or sentiment he endeavoured at the time to express. Indeed, the play of his fancy at such times

was quite remarkable, and so were his intellectual alertness and grasp. Without any apparent effort, his mental eye seemed to take in every feature of the situation. His allusions to persons or to circumstances of the hour were, therefore, invariably happy. Those who have witnessed, for example, his appearances at the Conference soiree will remember how appropriate and graceful his allusions always were, when referring, say, to the founders of the Union who might be present, to distinguished strangers who might also be beside him on the platform, or to those historical reminiscences in which he delighted to revel, and which he described in a quaint and genial manner all his own. And there was a lesson in everything for the stranger, for the youth, the rising hope of the church, and for his more immediate contemporaries and compeers. Standing on our church platforms, where ministers of other denominations were not seldom invited as guests, he would be certain, as at the Conference soiree, to make fitting allusions to their presence, and add to the Chairman's words of welcome. His remarks would sometimes come, indeed, as a surprise to the stranger; as perhaps when he reminded some one of their youthful days together at the University of Glasgow, or the Academy in Hamilton. An allusion to some event well known to both would make up the old feeling of comradeship, as would be seen, perhaps, when the stranger afterwards spoke, or by the warm shake of the hand when the meeting was brought to a close."

During the year Dr. Ferguson was President of the Evangelical Union, as well as previously, he regularly attended the committees which watched over the interests of the denomination. His presence was a welcome one, and his opinion, on any subject which required gentle treatment, was given with caution and received with gratitude. As he grew in years he ripened in heart, becoming more tender and considerate. To speak or act in a manner to grieve others, even under a sense of duty, pained him, and to commend and encourage others gave him pleasure. Loyalty to the denomination, and respect for all who were associated with him in service, were characteristics which were prominent in his demeanour, in office and out of it, endearing him to all who wrought with or knew him.

In retiring from the Chair of the Evangelical Union, he delivered a discourse full of reminiscences from the words, "I remember the days of old" (Psalms cxliii. 3). In introducing his subject, he said:—"Called for the third time in my life to preach a sermon as retiring President, and knowing that I will never fill the same position again, I think it both appropriate and important that I should use the privilege of an old man and look back upon the very beginning of our movement, drawing from early days and all the changes that have since transpired, the lessons which they seem to teach to the men of this generation and of the present time." After giving, in a graphic and genial way, the history of the Gospel movement which

began with James Morison, and had been embodied in the Union, he concluded by touching on the theological position its members occupied. In doing so, he remarked :—"I may be told that our theology and the preaching of our ministers have undergone a change within fifty years. There are different views of the Atonement among us, and different ways of stating the Gospel. Well, we cannot keep our students and preachers from reading new books, and have no wish to do so. New winds of thought are constantly blowing in the theological atmosphere. In no single denomination is the style of preaching exactly the same as it was fifty years ago. But surely, with the same Bible before us, and the same Bible believed in, any difference that exists must only be a different way of stating the same truth. So long as men admit the true and proper divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ, I have always been in favour of allowing a variety of expression and definition as to the mysterious depths of the Atonement, which no finite mind can fully fathom. While preferring myself the statement of our fathers, I believe that every minister in our Union would be willing to admit, and would rejoice to admit, that Jesus Christ was in a most important sense a substitutionary sacrifice for sinful men, and that His propitiation was and is in a most important sense the ground of sinful man's forgiveness, as well as through the Holy Spirit's application of the same, the source of his sanctification. And, however diverse the definitions which some among us would give of the

inspiration of the Scriptures, there is no ordained minister among us who would hesitate to take his text from any part of the Bible that is placed before him on the Lord's Day in his pulpit, regarding it all as, in a most important sense, the Word of God."

CHAPTER XVII.

1885-1891.

*Pastor's relation to the suffering—"The Sick Chamber"—
Its contents—A case—Preaching, City Temple—Inter-
national Council—Speech—Professor of Hebrew—
Description of his methods—Made Professor of Greek
Exegesis.*

ONE of the special duties of a Christian pastor is to attend to those who are confined to the sick chamber, or who pass through the fires of suffering. The Messiah, when He appeared, was to heal the broken-hearted; and those who will receive His welcome, "Come, ye blessed," are those concerning whom He will say, "I was sick, and ye visited me." The Gospel is a balm for wounded spirits, a solace to those who mourn, and an anodyne to those who are in pain. Its ministers are to dispense these blessings, and this duty Dr. Ferguson felt incumbent upon him. He had deep sympathy with all in distress, more especially with the weak and those on whom disease had laid a heavy hand.

In thinking over what more he could do for this class, he resolved to write a special book for them.

When considering the need of such a publication, he was surprised that so few books have been composed expressly for the sick and dying, whose number is always large. The healthy and strong are frequently dull and indifferent hearers and readers of the Gospel, but the sick are usually receptive and appreciative. The great question, "Wherewithal shall we appear before the Lord?" is pressed home powerfully, and in many instances they are led to review the past portion of their lives with penitence, and to look into the future in the spirit of anxious inquiry. How important, then, that a book suited to their needs should be at hand—one which God's Spirit might use for the enlightenment and comfort of the soul.

Such a book Dr. Ferguson published in 1885, entitled *The Sick Chamber: a Book for the Sick and Suffering*. It contains nineteen chapters of exhortations and meditation, addressed to all ages. They are tender, simple, and full of evangelical truth, the truths expounded and the duties he enforced being illustrated by cases taken out of the author's own experience and observation. He had found the presentation of Jesus Christ as a sacrifice for sin as the power of God unto salvation, and this he powerfully presented to the reader.

In the Preface he says: "The longer I live, and the nearer I myself draw to the eternal world, the more I am persuaded that the substitutionary sufferings of Christ, endured when 'His soul was made an offering for sin,' constitute the only valid basis

of peace for the soul of guilty man in the hour of death or in prospect of that hour. Throughout the following chapters I have, therefore, given unrivalled prominence to the work of the Mediator as the source of comfort alike to the dying inquirer and the dying believer. At the same time, I have not forgotten the corroborative assurance that springs from 'the witness of the Spirit' in the heart and life, nor the many grounds of consolation which are calculated to make the sinking sufferer contented and resigned."

What he wrote in his book he practised. Many were the instances in which he was as an angel messenger to those on the sick bed, when confined for a season or near the end of the journey. One case may be given of the way he ministered to the weak.

A young girl connected with the church, a real lamb of the flock, came under the power of that destroyer of the health of so many of Scotland's most amiable youths—consumption. She lingered two years in a weakly condition, which greatly tried her patience and her faith. Dark clouds sometimes overcame her, and she had difficulty in reconciling her own affliction with the goodness of her Heavenly Father. Besides being the light and joy of her home, she was also the companion of her widowed mother, who had been recently left with a large family to provide for, none of whom had reached the years when they could aid, except the daughter who was laid low. She felt her affliction to be hard, and thought that

God had forgotten His promise to be a Father to the fatherless and a husband to the widow. During the long period of illness, Dr. Ferguson was a constant visitor, yet it was months before he succeeded in leading the young soul to understand, even in the faintest degree, how all was well, and that divine love was at the heart of everything. With great prudence and gentleness he led her step by step, with the co-operation of a Christian lady, until the light dawned upon her spirit, and she was able to pray, "Not my will but Thine be done." Then she uncomplainingly rested in the Lord, and heaven's peace was increasingly hers.

A few days before her death she expressed a desire to partake of the Lord's Supper, and her pastor at once agreed to the request. Arrangements were made for its observance at her bedside, and, in the presence of her heart-broken mother and the lady previously referred to, Dr. Ferguson administered the sacred ordinance, all feeling another present—the Christ who died and lives for evermore. It was a hallowed scene, a hallowed service, and a hallowed preparation for entering into the presence of the Lord. In such ways as these did Dr. Ferguson render comfort to those who dwelt in the shaded chamber, and had immediately before them the crisis which we call Death and which angels term Life.

Another instance of his comforting ministry, which occurred earlier, may be noticed. There is one place in Scotland where his name will not soon be forgotten—the town of Eyemouth. In the year 1881 a terrific

storm swept over the East Coast, when no less than one hundred and twenty-nine of the best fishermen of the village were swallowed up by the angry deep, leaving behind them to mourn their loss seventy-three widows and two hundred and sixty-three children. Many of those who were drowned and suffered by the wreck of the fishing boats belonged to the little Evangelical Union Church. So soon as Dr. Ferguson heard of the calamity, he wrote to Mr. Alexander Glen, making inquiries into the condition of the stricken ones, and as to whether his presence would be of use under their painful circumstances. Being assured it would, he was soon on the spot, and commenced visiting the broken-hearted and sorrowing, imparting to them the consolation of the Gospel and much needed practical aid. On Sabbath he preached to the sorely stricken congregation with pathos and solemnity, and the discourse, says Mr. Glen, is fragrant in the minds of many until this day. When he returned to Glasgow he preached in his own and other churches, by special request, on "The Eyemouth Disaster," collections being taken at each service, realizing a large sum, which were sent to the Central Fund, which provided for the widows and the support and education of the children till they were fourteen years of age. In such labours of love as this Dr. Ferguson spent much of his strength, being known to a large circle as a healer of hearts and a drier of tears.

In the autumn of 1887 he preached two Sundays in the City Temple, London, with much acceptance. He had been introduced to Dr. Parker when he presided

at a breakfast given in Glasgow in honour of Rev. Henry Ward Beecher and the famous London preacher. Like most ministers, he was an admirer of the pastor of the City Temple, as well as the great pulpit orator of Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, speaking of them in eloquent terms of appreciation, and was therefore much gratified when requested to officiate in the City Temple, although he agreed to do so, as he said, with "a certain amount of trepidation."

The subjects selected for discourse were those familiar to him, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him," "The Seven Graces," "Zion, the birthplace of souls," and the "Banqueting House and its Banner." The audiences were large, and the quiet conversational and illustrative manner of the preacher's address captivated his London hearers. His earnestness and evangelical fervour had a wonderful effect on some, who afterwards thanked him for the benefit they had received. The sermons, as an appreciative hearer who was present remarks, "were words in season to weary spirits." Dr. Ferguson looked back upon his occupation of the pulpit of Dr. Parker with much interest, and spoke of it as one of the outstanding incidents of his life.

When the Evangelical Union was asked to send ten representatives to the first International Congregational Council, which was held in London in July, 1891, Dr. Ferguson was elected as one of the number. It was a meeting which greatly rejoiced his heart, for his sympathies were strongly in favour of the Congregational denomination, and he delighted to see and hear

its principal ministers. Now he would have the rare opportunity of meeting on common ground with distinguished members of the same order of churches from all nations, and learn how it fared with the brethren in their different spheres of Christian labour. He attended regularly, generally occupying a seat beside the venerable Principal Morison. At the morning session of Thursday, 16th July, "Congregationalism in relation to the Nation" was under consideration, and when "Home Missions" were being discussed, he delivered a most characteristic address which delighted the assembly. He began by saying:—

"I thought a few words might be acceptable from one who represents the City of Glasgow, the city of Chalmers, the city of Wardlaw, who baptized me, the city of Bonar and of Morison. I am happy to tell you that we have the venerable Dr. Morison with us this morning, and although he does not please to speak, nevertheless his heart goes out in Christian charity to all the brethren of this great Convention." He then went on to speak of home mission work in the city of his Church, and the operations of the society, in which there were Presbyterian, Congregational, and Baptist ministers, and concluded, "The day I got my parish I was very proud to get it, not only *quoad sacra*, but *quoad civilia*, because I had been very civilly treated. I am not going into statistics, but there are something like two thousand men and women a year lifted up to enjoy Christian ordinances, and the work is going on fairly well.

And oh! what a privilege it is to carry Christ to every man, to every house in the city, and every unit in every house, for the Gospel for every man is the basis of home mission work too! I hope the brethren of the Convention will go back to their homes with a desire to join in home mission work, and their commission is this, what Christ said to His convert of Gadara, 'Go tell thy neighbours what God has done for thee.'"

In the course of years Dr. Ferguson had been asked more than once to assist in the work of the Evangelical Union Theological Hall, and with the invitations he willingly complied. For the purpose of being able to discharge the duties with credit to himself and advantage to the students, he devoted himself to special studies in Hebrew and New Testament Greek. For more than one session he taught the Hebrew class, and would have been appointed regular professor, on Professor Hunter retiring, had he indicated that he would accept the office. The Rev. Alex. Wilson, of Paisley, then a student, furnishes an account of his work, when for a season he filled the Hebrew Chair.

"It was in the autumn of 1861," he writes, "that Dr. Ferguson undertook, for a short period, the Hebrew class in our Theological Hall, or Academy as it was then called. The occasion for his services arose through the retirement of Mr., afterwards Dr., Guthrie from the professorial chair. Dr. Ferguson was then in the prime of his early manhood, and had the reputation among those who knew his

linguistic attainments of being a good Hebrew scholar. His appointment gave great satisfaction to the students, and their expectations were more than fulfilled. Some of us had just entered the Hall, and were making our first acquaintance with the Hebrew tongue. Professor Guthrie had only given a few lessons, so that we had to begin *de novo* with Mr. Ferguson. It was soon quite evident to all the students, senior and junior, that our new tutor was master of the situation. He made no pretensions to superior knowledge, and, indeed, airs of that sort were entirely foreign to his nature. At the same time, his scholarship and ability were conspicuous to those of our seniors, especially those who were best able to judge. He was patient and painstaking, and, without any apparent effort, his discipline was perfect. Busied with pulpit and pastoral work, he had little time to prepare elaborate lectures in exegesis or criticism. He therefore confined himself principally to the teaching of the language; but I distinctly remember that we did have a short course of expository lectures, and I still retain an impression of the spirited way in which he defended his views when at any point they differed from those of recognized authorities. He always cultivated a classic style of composition. This, combined with a fine substrate of poetic thought, gave a charm to his lectures, which had the additional merit of acute and vigorous thinking as well as good scholarship. If his sense of duty had constrained him to embrace the opportunity, which I have always understood was

placed within his reach, I am persuaded he could have done splendid service for our denomination, and perhaps for the Church at large, in the Hebrew Chair. It is to be regretted that his professoriate in another chair came too late in life and was of such short duration. So far as I can recollect, nothing could be finer than the influence he had upon the students as a Christian teacher of high attainments and noble aspirations."

In 1891, when it was found necessary to appoint a permanent professor to succeed Dr. Morison in the department of New Testament Exegesis, who had retired because of advancing age and increasing weakness, it was agreed by the committee that Dr. Ferguson be requested to take his place. The Conference, on the motion of the President, passed a resolution unanimously in favour of the committee's recommendation, and the call was responded to by Dr. Ferguson, who was willing to undertake the duties. The appointment gave pleasure to the students, who knew that in their new preceptor they had a teacher of experience, spirituality, scholarship, and soundness of faith, who would be to them a father, and in his prelections lead them into the paths of thought which had Christ for their centre, and the glory of God and the good of souls for their aim.

CHAPTER XVIII.

1895.

Jubilee—Sermons—Rev. James Ross—Dr. Ferguson—Professor G. A. Smith, D.D.—Soiree in City Hall—Chairman's address—Speeches by Rev. Dr. Stalker—Rev. Dr. Oliver—Presentation of addresses—Cheque—Portrait—Dr. Ferguson's reply.

THERE are few pastors of Congregational or other churches who have ministered to the same people for half a century. Change of places of labour are common, more especially when the minister enters upon his public work young and inexperienced. The difficulty is greater in a large city than in small towns and rural parts, where the counter-attractions are not so numerous and opposition less. A city ministry is trying for body and mind, and can only be sustained with efficiency for a long period by those who have peculiar gifts and graces, well-stored minds, and fair physical constitutions.

Dr. Ferguson could not be called robust in body, but by great care and abstinence from the use of stimulants he had on the whole a fair measure of health. His mind was kept fresh by study and

contact with the movements of the times, and in consequence he was able to hold his own for fifty years in the same church, and on the occasion of his jubilee could, in company with his beloved and loyal people, rejoice and sing praises to the Lord of their life and salvation.

He was ordained on the first Thursday of April, 1845, and concluded the fiftieth year of his ministry on the first Sabbath of April, 1895, the unique event being celebrated in a worthy manner by the church and his numerous friends. On Sabbath, the 31st March, special sermons were preached by the Rev. James Ross, of Eglinton Street Congregational Church, in the morning, by the Pastor in the afternoon, and the Rev. Professor George Adam Smith, D.D., LL.D., Free Church College, in the evening. The congregations were crowded at all the services, and the deepest interest was manifested in the proceedings. The sermons bore on the interesting occasion, and emphasized the value of the work of the Gospel ministry, and the necessity which existed of being faithful to the truths made known in the name of the Head of the Church.

Mr. Ross, in the course of a thoughtful sermon on the unity of life and sympathy between pastor and people, said :—" Paul spoke of his flock as being his—in all his love for them, care of them, and labour for them ; and I believe your pastor could at any time, during his long pastorate, have used the same words in speaking of you, as he can use them now. For he has given abundant proof that this church has

been nearest to his heart in all the activities of his life, and in all his cares and anxieties. Although he has given much valuable work in many departments of service for God and men, I am very sure that this church has always had the first place in his heart, in his prayers and labours. Into the life of every individual and family he has tried to enter with sympathy and with a sincere desire to benefit all. You who have known him longer and better than I can testify that this is true; but long ago it was impressed upon me by what I was able to learn of his mind and heart. His tenacious memory never let slip from it any one who had been under his pastoral care; and his reminiscences of many who have now passed upwards, or who have gone to other lands, have all been so full, so interesting and tender, as to show that the life of his people has ever been closely bound up in his own, and that he has claimed them all as his—in whom to rejoice, for whom to labour, and whom to love.”

Dr. Ferguson took for his text, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Gal. vi. 14). His first words were:—“My first text when I commenced my ministry fifty years ago was, ‘I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified’ (1 Cor. ii. 2). To-day I close that fifty years’ ministry with the words of the cognate text which I have just read out; for I wish to show before I close that during all that period I have been,

in an important sense preaching the cross." The sermon abounded with reminiscences of the years which were past and incidents of his ministry. He claimed to have been "all along a preacher of the Gospel." "The cross," he said, "has been my darling theme hitherto, and, as the poet Cowper says, 'It shall be till I die.'"

Professor Smith, before beginning his sermon, said that he counted it a privilege to take part in a service commemorative of fifty years of so serviceable and honourable work. There was no work which at once involved a greater or more increasing strain, and exerted a richer and more increasing influence on the community, than a long pastorate in the same place worthily sustained. To have kept so large a congregation together after fifty years in the same church was of itself a noble work; but to that the pastor had added unwearied labours on behalf of the commonweal in Glasgow, and he supposed there had been no great movements for progress or reform, especially in connection with temperance, which Dr. Ferguson has not assisted during the last fifty years.

On the Tuesday evening following, a soiree was held in the City Hall, which was crowded by an enthusiastic audience in honour of the jubilee of Dr. Ferguson, and to witness the presentation of valuable gifts and suitable addresses. The platform was filled to overflowing by ministers of all denominations, influential gentlemen of the city, office-bearers of churches and other friends, the chair being occupied by Mr. Alexander Lamberton, J.P., who as a boy sat

under the guest of the evening when taken to the church by his honoured father, Bailie Lamberton. Apologies from various people were read, among whom were Principal Caird, Principal Douglas, Principal Fairbairn, Oxford; Rev. Dr. Parker, London; Mr. John Wilson, M.P.; Rev. Dr. Marshall Lang, Bishop Harrison, Professor Taylor, Rev. Dr. Adamson, and Rev. George Gladstone. After tea had been served, the Rev. John Hunter, D.D., offered a most impressive prayer, and the business of the meeting was introduced by the Chairman, who, in a brief address, said "It must be most gratifying to Dr. Ferguson and his people to witness such a splendid representative audience gathered to do honour to the preacher, the citizen, the author, the poet, and friend. Fifty years' ministry such as his, in the same church and in the same city, was a splendid record and service to God and man. They could but faintly realize what had been accomplished, but God had written it in His book of remembrance. They admired his gentleness of spirit, his willingness to assist in every good work. If it could be said of any one, it could be said of him—that he did what he could. He was one who for his work's sake was worthy of all praise."

The Rev. Dr. Stalker, of Free St. Matthew's Church, gave a short address, in which he spoke brotherly words of the Evangelical Union and Dr. Morison, its founder. Referring to Dr. Ferguson, Dr. Stalker said he was always impressed with the courtesy and gentleness of Dr. Ferguson, and his pithy, racy humour, but

he admired more the intellectual and literary power of his writing.

He was followed by the Rev. Robert Craig, M.A., D.D., who referred to the great success that characterized the ministry of Dr. Ferguson, and gave interesting reminiscences of his connection with the Doctor during the time they were colleagues in Montrose Street Church. He said the mood of mind most becoming the guest of the evening and himself is that of the Psalmist in the 103rd Psalm, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: the Lord who healeth all thy diseases and crowneth thee with lovingkindness."

The Rev. Dr. Oliver, Moderator of the U.P. Church Synod, was then called upon by the Chairman. He said he appeared as an old neighbour to testify to his esteem for Dr. Ferguson. Their friend had been a hard worker ever since he came to know him—a hard worker in his study, his pulpit, and pastorate, on the temperance platform, and also in connection with the educational institutions of the city. He had put many of them to shame by his abundant labours, and he was still with them, his mental eye undimmed and spiritual force unabated. Might God spare and strengthen him for long years to come to be a blessing to the community.

The choir then sang very beautifully and with great precision the chorus, "How lovely are the messengers that preach us the gospel of peace!"

The Chairman said we have now reached an interesting stage of the proceedings. He was very

pleased to introduce to the meeting Mr. Wm. Johnston, Secretary, to present an Address from the Directors of the Scottish Temperance League, in which they said:—"We admire your gifts and graces, your public spirit, your catholicity, your geniality, your brotherly kindness, and your large-hearted sympathy with suffering humanity. We honour you for your personal worth, for your life-long devotion to the temperance cause and other Christian movements. We congratulate you on reaching your jubilee in such vigour of body and mind, and we trust that you have still many years of usefulness in store, and that when your work on earth is done you will receive the welcome and the well-done of your Lord and Master."

The Rev. Mr. Rollo, of John Knox Street Baptist Church, then presented an Address from the Association of Baptist, Congregational, and Evangelical Union Ministers of Glasgow, in which they testified that—"By his genial wisdom, large experience, and catholicity of spirit, he had contributed greatly to the brightness and profit of its discussions. The Association has had upon its roll the names of several who have rendered conspicuous service for Christ, but there is not one who has gained more general esteem and warmer Christian affection than Dr. Ferguson."

The Rev. Robert Hislop was then called upon, and presented an Address from the Conference of the Evangelical Union, in which they declared—"We grudge you no honour, no public recognition, no expression of private or general esteem pressed upon

your acceptance, and from whatsoever quarter coming. Well have you served your day and generation as a man. Well have you served your city as a public-spirited citizen. You have taken your share (and what an eminent share !) in civic and social functions, on benevolent and philanthropic platforms, in educational interests, in inter-denominational movements, for at what kind of social or religious meeting have you not spoken ? in what kind of pulpit have you not preached ? You have shown everywhere and to every one how possible it is, and how beautiful it is, to be denominational in testimony, yet super-denominational and catholic in spirit. You have thus, dear brother, done much for others, in the widest reference, but our glad acknowledgment, our chivalrous contention is that you have done unspeakably more for us—your own.”

Mr. W. N. Taylor, as representing the various Sabbath Schools, the Literary Society, Boys’ Brigades, and Sewing Classes connected with Montrose Street Church, then presented Dr. Ferguson with a beautifully illuminated address, and a Bible for Mrs. Ferguson. In the Address it was said :—“ As scholars and members of Bible Classes, we owe to the church over which you have presided so creditably and so honourably for half a century those splendid opportunities of religious instruction which we now enjoy. Many of us have heard from our parents of the great love which they bore to you, of the knowledge which they derived from you of God’s great salvation, and of the comfort and strength obtained through your ministrations.”



Mr. D. Carmichael, Convener, and Mr. William Shanks, Secretary to the Deacons and Trustees of the Church, presented Dr. Ferguson with an address most artistically illuminated and encased in a handsome casket, which concluded thus—"Our united prayer is that God, whom you have so faithfully served during more than half a century, will deal bountifully with you and those dear to you during the coming years, and that you may in His good time enter into the joy and reward of a singularly blessed ministry."

Mr. D. L. Stevenson, Treasurer of the Church and of the Testimonial Fund, was now called upon to make the presentation. In a suitable speech, he referred, in glowing terms, to the esteem in which their pastor was held by the church and friends; the love they bore him, and the high estimate they had formed of his long and faithful work as an ambassador of Christ, and concluded by saying:—"Now, sir, in name of the committee and subscribers, it affords me the greatest pleasure to hand over to you this exquisite painting, which I consider a true portrait and a noble work of art. The artist has spared no pains in its production—the easy pose, the graceful outlines, the sympathetic feeling, the vigorous dash, mark it as a great work that will endure and verify the saying, that 'life is short, but art is long.' The hope of all your friends is that you may be long spared in health of body and vigour of mind, so as to resemble your likeness on this canvas, the chief characteristic of which is

that the oftener you see it the more you like it and the more beautiful it becomes. That this leading characteristic may apply tenfold to yourself is our earnest wish and prayer. Along with this splendid work of art, in name of the subscribers, I have also much pleasure in handing you a cheque for over £160."

At this stage the portrait was unveiled, when there was loud and prolonged applause, it being at once seen by the vast assembly that the artist (Mr. John Lavery, A.R.S.A.) had produced a most striking and faithful likeness.

Mr. James Smart then stepped forward, and after repeating some original suitable lines said :—"Dear Dr. Ferguson, I have great pleasure in asking you to accept for Mrs. Ferguson this diamond ring, and this ruby and diamond bangle for Miss Ferguson. Our earnest desire and prayer for you and yours is that you may be long spared to each other and to the church you have so long lived and laboured for."

Mr. Lamberton called upon Dr. Ferguson, who, on rising, was received with loud and prolonged applause, the vast assembly also rising and waving their handkerchiefs.

When silence was restored, Dr. Ferguson, who was deeply touched with the whole proceedings, said :—"Mr. Chairman, Representative Delegates, and Ladies and Gentlemen,—You will believe me when I say that words fail me to express my gratitude for the Addresses which have been presented to me, the very valuable testimonial, with other gifts, and the alto-



PRESENTATION PORTRAIT.

gether overwhelming reception which this great audience has accorded to me. From my heart of hearts I thank you, and above all the gracious Father who has spared me and permitted me to render the amount of service to which kind reference has been generously made. I deeply feel, however, how great my shortcomings have been, and I must be allowed to quote the words of the Master, and say, 'I am an unprofitable servant; I have done (that is only done) that which was my duty to do.'"

Continuing, he gave a touching history of his public life, of the changes which had taken place since he had been ordained in the same hall fifty years ago, and expressed his gratitude for all the kind words uttered concerning him, and the beautiful Addresses he had received. Referring to representatives from public bodies on the platform, he said:—"I am proud to-night to see gentlemen present from various public bodies to which I have not yet referred—several of whom, I fear, can have no opportunity to let their voices be heard on account of the crowded state of our programme. I have had great pleasure in speaking at the public meetings of the Sabbath School Union, represented by Mr. Bryden and Mr. Bryce; of the Y.M.C.A., represented by Mr. Bruce and Mr. Oatts; of the Clan Ferguson, represented by Mr. A. A. Fergusson, of the Delinquency Board, and Mr. A. J. Ferguson, secretary of the Clan. I mention last, because not least, the Glasgow School Board, represented by Sir John Neilson Cuthbertson and the Rev. Dr. William Boyd. I congratulate Sir John on

the degree of Doctor of Laws, newly and worthily conferred on him by the University of our city, as to whom you will allow me to say that perhaps no more useful citizen lives within the bounds of the city of Glasgow—while his companion to-night, Dr. Boyd, is one of the kindest-hearted clergymen I know, and is doing admirable work at the School Board of the city. I do not regret the six years' work I gave to the cause of education between 1882 and 1888. Perhaps my life was as useful and successful at that time as at any other period."

After speaking of the gifts, addresses, and portrait, which he greatly appreciated, he concluded with the words:—"What better conclusion can I get, after having received all these gifts and honours, than the words of Paul to the Philippians—'Not because I desire a gift; but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all, and abound; having received of Epaphroditus (let me say from these various Epaphrodituses) the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing unto God.' May I be spared and strengthened to show you that my gratitude is genuine and sincere."

At the close of Dr. Ferguson's interesting address, the choir sang the Hallelujah Chorus from the "Messiah."

Votes of thanks were then proposed by Dr. Neil Carmichael, Mr. P. B. Bryce, Mr. Matthew M. Kirk, Mr. William James Wood, and Rev. William Arnott, all of whom spoke highly of the guest of the evening,

of his work and worth, and wished him still many years of service for his Master ere he was called to a higher sphere.

In drawing the enthusiastic proceedings to a conclusion the chairman, Mr. Lamberton, expressed the very great pleasure it had given him to preside over such a magnificent and brilliant assembly, to do honour to his old and much-esteemed friend, Dr. Ferguson. He would now ask the Rev. Robert Campbell, Calton U.P. Church, to bring the meeting to a close, which he did by pronouncing the benediction.¹

¹ A full account of the joyous celebration is published in a beautiful quarto volume, with portraits of Dr. Ferguson, Deacons, Trustees, and photographs of the Addresses, under the title, "Ministerial Jubilee of the Rev. Prof. Fergus Ferguson, M.A., D.D."

CHAPTER XIX.

1895.

Pastoral relation—Mr. M. M. Kirk's estimate—Scholarship—Sermons—Prayers—Visits to the afflicted—Attendance at meetings—As controversialist—General estimate—Mr. W. Shanks' estimate.

THE jubilee services recorded in the previous chapter were the outward manifestation of a deep feeling of love and trust which animated all the members of the church over which Dr. Ferguson had presided for fifty years. Temptations to leave them for other spheres of labour had been often presented to him, but his devotion to his first love was so strong that he easily resisted all the efforts made with that end in view. The lives of his people and his own were bound up in one bundle, and he was determined the sacred tie should not be severed except by the hand of death. In this as in other respects his pastorate was unique. They never wearied in hearing his voice and attending to his teaching, and he was nowhere so much at home as when addressing his own beloved flock. The relationship of pastor and people was close and sacred, and this became more evident as the years went by.

The view the office-bearers and members took of their pastor is portrayed in the following words written by Mr. Matthew M. Kirk, a deacon, who had full opportunities of understanding the sentiments of the congregation and the manner of man and minister Dr. Ferguson was. Mr. Kirk writes :—

“It is difficult to specify the qualities which enabled our late pastor to wield his peculiar power as a preacher.

“His scholarship was of a high order. As a Hebraist and theologian he occupied a creditable position among his compeers in the ministry. He brought to the discharge of his pulpit work a devout heart, a consecrated desire, a cultured mind, and a broad and brotherly spirit. Out of the treasury of his accumulated knowledge he could draw at will things new and old and apply them to the purpose of the moment with rare skill and appropriateness.

“He was not dependent for the impressions he produced on the arts of eloquence or oratory. Still I must claim for him that he was singularly apt and felicitous in the choice of his phraseology ; his composition was uniformly elegant and of rare literary beauty. His voice was rich and strong, and while it had great penetrating quality, it was at the same time mellow and musical. His elocution was faultless. Indeed, his declamation was at times delivered with such dramatic skill and effect that an actor might have envied his mastery of the histrionic art.

“His sermons were generally prepared with a purpose. Warning, counsel, instruction, consolation,

were, according as the general or individual circumstances of the time suggested, made the purpose of his discourses. Many a doubt has been removed, and many a trouble lightened. Often has the weary heart been refreshed and the wounded spirit healed. Who shall tell of the strength imparted to struggle with temptation, and the courage gained by the timid, by the preaching of our pastor? We were sometimes blamed for clannishness, but it was the clannishness of a family, and the cause of it was our love for our chief.

“A characteristic of his sermons was simplicity of expression. He cultivated this virtue almost to a fault. His argument was always lucid, his logic clear. Thus his sermons had the merit of being at once intelligible to the young and simple-minded, while at the same time they had weight and worth, interest and instruction for the older and more thoughtful in his audience. A feature of his style was his liking for the parabolic and pictorial method of illustrating his subjects. He would personalize the Christian graces and introduce to his hearers in all the attractiveness of feminine beauty and grace, the virtues he sought to inculcate. Or, on the other hand, he could present the vices he abjured in all the repulsive ugliness which human deformity can display. He often sought to turn to religious account the passing events of the time, and utilized for the purposes of the pulpit such subjects as occupied for the moment a large share of public attention. Indeed, he occasionally addressed himself to the spiritu-

alizing of subjects which seemed most unlikely to lend themselves to his purpose as a religious teacher. But the very strangeness of the titles of these sermons brought crowds to hear him. And such was his remarkable skill in the use of his selected parable that it might be said that of many idle, curious, or indifferent who found themselves in his audience,

‘They who came to scoff, remained to pray.’

He was always in earnest in his pulpit. The trend of all his effort was strongly evangelical even to the last. The love of Christ was his favourite and never-failing theme, and to reiterate with passionate earnestness the lessons of the atonement was the climax of his desire as a preacher.

“No estimate of Dr. Ferguson should leave out of account the subtle influence he wielded in the offering of prayer. He seemed to get wonderfully near to the throne of Grace. His spiritual feeling and tender sympathy enabled him to feel the needs of his people, and it is given to few men to inspire others with the feeling that they have got so close to the ear of the Eternal, as we could not help feeling Dr. Ferguson did. It was usually made known to the Doctor when circumstances of unusual anxiety or interest affected any of our members, because it was felt that ‘the prayers of a righteous man availeth much,’ and trial, temptation, sorrow, sickness, bereavement, by passing through the crucible of his sanctified expression in prayer, seemed to bring the answer even in the asking.

“The sick and the dying longed for his visits (which, by the way, were most faithfully made when

sickness was serious), for he seemed to bring into the sick room the very atmosphere of the other world. His very presence helped to comfort the suffering, and his prayers lifted them into the very presence of Christ, and gave a foretaste of the joy of heaven. It was the same with the bereaved. At a funeral service he opened the dark caverns of gloom in which the sufferers were bound with unspeakable sorrow, and let in the blessed sunshine of God's hope to their hearts. These miracles were worked by the sympathetic and efficacious exercise of prayer, and are only possible to one who walks with God.

“Dr. Ferguson brought to the discharge of the pastor's duties exceptional qualifications. With an agreeable presence, a kindly nature expressed in his countenance, and a gentle manner, he invited confidence and inspired trust. He was excessively meek, and could accommodate himself with ease to the humblest surrounding, and so could get to the heart and understand the life of his poorest members. At the same time he had, without any conscious pride, the bearing and dignity, the courtesy and instinct of a true gentleman. His pastoral visits to our homes were greatly appreciated. He did not stay too long, and thereby put the domestic arrangements into disorder; nor yet too short, and thereby suggest a lack of appreciation of the importance of the occasion. He manifested an interest in each member of the household, and he made us feel that the delicate state of the daughter's health, the prospects of the son who is succeeding in business, the solicitous concern for

the wearied and hard-worked mother were all very real to him. The affairs of the family always seemed of importance to him, and his genial manner and gracious countenance were apparent even to the children, who had no improper fear of him. And when his visit closed with, 'Let us bend the knee,' the influence of his personality left a train of sunshine which was felt for good long after he had gone.

"For all meetings in connection with any branch of church work his countenance was anxiously sought. The genial side of his nature shone out on the occasions of our numerous social gatherings. His short addresses were invariably sanguine and encouraging. His mild pleasantries were delightful. He was guilty of perpetrating puns somewhat freely, and chestnuts did not disagree with him. But all his joking was so transparently kindly that even punning was not only not irksome but was really welcome. 'Are you fond of chronology, Miss ——?' he would smilingly observe, as he passed the *dates*. Or, 'A fig for you, Mr. ——, without offence!' as he handed on the figs.

"Our prayer meetings were poorly attended as a rule, but a faithful few would rather have chosen to miss the Sabbath service than the Wednesday meeting. Here the Doctor was 'the prophet at home.' The lessons gained in attractiveness at the small meeting. The product of thought and examination was conveyed in an easy conversational style, at once homely and masterly.

"He always attended the deacons' meetings, and

while he was not intrusive in matters of business, he knew all that was going on, and guided with tact and discrimination the delicate and difficult discussions of the brethren in that court. His closing words in a discussion at the Literary Society (which he often visited) were models of accuracy, illumination, and conciliatoriness.

“He was in great demand at marriages. The solemnity of the service as he performed it was duly impressive. There was no haste, no perfunctoriness. The obligations were imposed with becoming gravity, but without a suggestion of mournfulness. It was at once serious and bright, a religious service, sacred and beautiful. In the social function which followed he was in buoyant and happy mood. His little speeches were delightful, he had so many good and kind things to say, and he said them so neatly. His allusions sparkled with kindly humour and piquant wit. His cheerfulness overflowed and imparted gladness of spirit to all the company. He sometimes composed a few original verses, slight and simple, but having a local or personal fitness and kindly ring about them which made them most acceptable on such an occasion.

“He was a conversationalist of rare quality. Possessing a marvellous memory, a rare power of observation and great literary culture, and having travelled far and seen much, his table talk was most entertaining. He had met many celebrities, heard many famous preachers (and his ‘Men I have Heard’ in the *Guide*, is a string of pearls in its way), and his

reminiscences were charming. Whether the subject was grave or gay, lively or severe, he could enter into it with zest, enlightening with his knowledge, brightening it with his humour, correcting it with his wisdom, and sweetening it with his goodness. While, like Yorick, he often 'set the table in a roar,' he never did so at the cost of his personal dignity nor sacrificed the obligations of his calling.

"He was a willing and a constant worker. The claims upon him from outside were very numerous, for he was popular everywhere. He could not resist, even when hardly physically able, the claims of men who pled for his aid; and many causes in need have benefited by his generous readiness to go out and help the weak and struggling.

"His office-bearers and his church would gladly have lightened his labours and lengthened his days. Indeed plans, prompted by love for him, were being made to accomplish that end, but before they were completed God took him.

'He was a man, take him for all in all,
We may not look upon his like again.'

Better preachers may be, perhaps better pastors too, but a similar combination of estimable qualities are not often found in one man. He has entered his well-won rest; he has gained his well-earned crown; he shall live forever with his Lord, and his blessed memory will be a precious inheritance, treasured by thousands whom he ministered to with absolute fidelity as Christ's ambassador."

Mr. William Shanks, Secretary to the Deacons and Trustees, bears like testimony, and adds the following words:—"Few men have been so richly endowed for the work that falls to the pastor of a working-class dissenting congregation as Dr. Ferguson was. In the homes of the sick and suffering his was a gracious presence. The sick-room was transformed by his gentle ministrations. Volumes might be written of the varied and interesting experiences of his long and blissful pastorate in Glasgow. When passing along the street one day he met one who, with her husband and family, were at one time members in Blackfriars Street Church. She seemed in great distress, and sought to pass without recognizing the Doctor. Perceiving her distress, he went forward and made kindly inquiry about her welfare. Her story was a sad one. Her husband had just died, and she was in great distress because she had no minister, as her husband had never joined any other church after leaving Blackfriars Street, where he had been the cause of much worry and grief to his minister. At once did Dr. Ferguson soothe and comfort the stricken heart by volunteering to accompany the sorrowing wife to her home, where he was installed as the minister of the bereaved family of one who was wont to vex him very much. Finding out that the family were in straitened circumstances, and that the husband had expressed a desire to be buried in his native town, some miles from Glasgow, he took upon himself the burden of the expense, and made glad the widow's heart."

A volume could be filled by such cases of good doing as these. Dr. Ferguson wept with those who wept, and rejoiced with those who were glad, and thus fulfilled the law of Christ. Much of his power in the pulpit was heart-power, without which, indeed, the minister of the Gospel is largely a sounding brass and tinkling cymbal.

CHAPTER XX.

1896-1897.

Dr. W. Pulsford on Union—Advocates Union with Congregationalists—Chairman of New Union—His Work—Colleague—Breakdown in Health—Last Services—Illness—Death—General Mourning—Funeral—Rev. William Dunlop's Address.

IN an article which Dr. Ferguson contributed to the *Evangelical Repository* in September, 1876, he said:—"It is already well known throughout the country that Dr. William Pulsford, of Glasgow, in April last delivered a deliberate and elaborate address at the Annual Meeting of the Scottish Congregational Union on certain reforms and ameliorative measures which he thought essential to the Union's well-being. Leaving the climax to the last, like a skilful orator, he urged the ministers and laymen before him, finally, to appoint a committee, whose duty it should be to prepare a scheme, or draft of a scheme, 'for securing closer union with the Evangelical Union of Scotland, and that on the principle of comprehension and not compromise.' Dr. Pulsford's proposal was received with repeated bursts of applause from at least a section of

his hearers; and, as no counter-resolution was moved, we are warranted to conclude that it was not viewed with anything of the nature of dislike by any member of that Conference."

This proposal was one which touched his heart, for he never forgot that his father and mother had been members of a Congregational church, that he himself had been in the same communion, and had sat at the feet of Wardlaw. He sympathized with the proposal, and in the article referred to advocated not a corporate union but the federation of the two Unions. "It would be better," he wrote, "meanwhile that the two Academies should be kept apart, for although it may seem at first sight that very little keeps us separate, that little point sends the one body over to the Arminian or Free-Will school of theology, and keeps the other on the Calvinian side of the house."

This was found, after negotiations had been entered into, not to be the real state of the two denominations. The theological attitude of parties had changed, and in 1896 the union was accomplished, and the first meeting of the united body under the name of "The Congregational Union of Scotland, comprising the Evangelical Union and Congregational Union as existing at 1896," was held in Augustine Church, Edinburgh, in May, 1897, when Dr. Ferguson was unanimously elected chairman. The position he received as a mark of esteem for himself, but more as an acknowledgment that all the former divisions between the two sections of Independents in Scotland were healed, and that henceforth they would be one in

heart and mind in advancing the common cause of the Redeemer.

The work which devolves on the chairman during his year of office is of a very trying character, he being expected to take a general oversight of the whole body and to answer as many calls, as he possibly can, for special and anniversary sermons and social meetings. To these Dr. Ferguson gave mind, time, and strength—far more, indeed, than it was advisable to do at his years. Feeling vigorous, he did not spare himself, but attended both to his duties to his own people and to those who looked to him for counsel and assistance.

Previous to the Jubilee celebration a movement had been made in the direction of having an assistant to take part of his pastoral work. Owing to the office-bearers knowing that he was very much opposed to this step being taken, it was considered most advisable to postpone the matter till the Jubilee services were passed. Shortly after these were over there were, on Dr. Ferguson's part, evident signs of declining strength and want of power to do what previously he could easily perform. On several occasions he was startled by some manifestations of weakness in his constitution which led his doctor to warn him against working so hard, advising him to take things much easier. Acting as Professor in the Theological Hall at this time, and unwilling to give up any of his church work, he resigned his Chair, and gave his whole strength to his ministerial duties. To preach to his people and to be moving out and in

among his flock as counsellor, consoler, friend, and pastor was his absorbing passion. He was most unwilling to share the love and attachment of his people's hearts with another, forgetting that the very love he prized so much was the mainspring of the increasing desire to get an assistant. After many months' loving and gentle pressure he cordially agreed to the proposal. By this time, however, the office-bearers were convinced that a colleague was necessary, and he acquiesced in their judgment. Steps were taken in October, 1897, and a colleague was called, but the invitation was not accepted. Immediately afterwards he suddenly broke down in health, and had to take his bed, from which he never rose.

On the 17th October he preached in his own church with his wonted spirit and power. His subjects were those he delighted to dwell upon, and they touched his own heart and the heart of the people. Like so many of Christ's servants, he seems to have been directed by the Spirit to prepare the minds of the flock for the removal of their under-shepherd; for in the afternoon he took for his text the words:—"I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope" (1 Thess. iv. 13). On the Wednesday following he attended the week-night service, which was always to him "a little Sabbath in the middle of the week," and spoke with more than ordinary pathos on the 23rd Psalm. In closing this his last address to his flock, he commented at some length on the words, "Yea, though I

walk through the valley of the shadow of death," saying, "We do not know who of us will go through the valley first, but when my time comes I hope the Lord will enable me to go through the valley of the shadow like a man."

As the meeting separated he shook hands with the few who that evening had met with him round the throne of grace. Next day he wrote to the pastor of the Annan Congregational Church, informing him of the train with which he would come on the following Monday to address the social meeting. He also wrote to Mr. Shanks, the secretary of the deacons, thanking him for keeping him acquainted with what was being done regarding securing a colleague, stating that he intended to write a letter to the minister called. On Friday he did not feel so strong, but nothing serious was anticipated. On the morning of Saturday, the 23rd October, he became suddenly unwell, and the difficulty of breathing was so great that those around feared he would not see the dawn of day. Dr. Couper, his medical attendant, however, was able to relieve him, and ere the evening of Saturday he was much improved. On Sunday he was in good spirits, and inquired as to how the services were attended, and expressed his gratitude to the Rev. William Arnott, who had kindly left his own church and preached in Montrose Street Church. In this condition he remained till Friday, the 29th, when he had a severe relapse, his weakness increasing day by day. He suffered much pain, and was frequently insensible. During the intervals his mind was on his work, and

he had a desire to preach. On one occasion he burst out with the words :—

“ Jesus shall reign where’er the sun
Does his successive journeys run ;
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.”

Gradually he became weaker—the earthly house of the tabernacle was being taken down—and at about a quarter to four o’clock on the afternoon of Wednesday, 3rd November, 1897, Rev. Dr. Fergus Ferguson passed away without struggle or pain into the home and the rest prepared for him before the foundation of the world.

The news of his decease came upon those outside of his home with a degree of suddenness. Hopes were entertained that he might overcome the disease, as he had done other illnesses, and that he would be restored to somewhat of his wonted vigour. These anticipations were not realized, and the fact that his voice would be heard no more in the pulpit or on the platform, and his special presence would never again be seen, touched all hearts inside and many outside his ecclesiastical circle. From his long labours in the city of Glasgow and elsewhere, he was a well-known and much esteemed minister of the Gospel, and his name was as a household word with thousands.

The honour in which he was held became manifest at his funeral, which took place on Saturday afternoon. The service in his late residence was conducted by the Rev. Robert Campbell, Calton United Presbyterian Church, and the Rev. William Arnott, Dennistoun

Evangelical Union Church. The public service was held in the Church, Montrose Street, which was crowded in every part by an audience representing every section of evangelical Christianity—the Corporation, School Board, Temperance Societies, Glasgow Evangelistic Association, Young Men's Christian Association, the Clan Ferguson, and the general public. Among those present were Bailie M'Cutcheon, Bailie Sinclair, Bailie Cleland, Bailie Fife, Bailie Thomson, Bailie W. F. Anderson, Bailie Steel, and Bailie King, all wearing their chains of office. Mr. James Nicol, the City Chamberlain, accompanied the magistrates; Mr. John Wilson, M.P.; Rev. Dean Reid, of Mile-End Episcopal Church; the Rev. John Burnett, St. David's Free Church; the Rev. James Paton, St. Paul's Established Church; the Rev. James Stalker, D.D., Free Church; Rev. Alex. Oliver, D.D., United Presbyterian Church; Dr. Ross, of the Established Normal School; Dr. Glaister, Mr. Wm. Maclean, ex-Bailie Chisholm, ex-Bailie Gray, and the leading ministers of the Congregational Union. The Rev. George Gladstone presided.

The service was simple but impressive, and many in the vast congregation were deeply moved. Rev. Dr. Hunter read a portion of Scripture, and Rev. James Ross offered prayer. Rev. William Dunlop delivered a touching funeral address. He said that that would be a day sadly remembered among them. Dr. Ferguson would be remembered not only for what he was and for what he had done, but he was the chief link which bound them to the days of old, and

as such he was very dear to them. He had often tried to picture what the Evangelical Union would have been without their departed brother, but he had been unable to realize what it was until that day. There might be brought into the Union intellect, wide scholarship, and great eloquence, but Dr. Ferguson brought to it a richer gift than all these even combined, because he had the characteristic of being beloved by everyone—a characteristic which could only rest in the heart of a man who himself loved everyone first of all. He had that in him which made a house a home, and by his happy humour, his affection, his deep interest, and his simple enthusiasm and loyalty to Christ he made meetings with him delightful, and created a sweet memory of something that they longed to repeat. He considered their beloved brother the Apostle John of the Evangelical Union. At the close of the address the congregation sang a hymn which was composed in 1850 by Dr. Ferguson :—

“ Oh, when I stand 'mid yonder shining throng,
And on fair Canaan's coast my Saviour see,
I'll add this chorus to my swelling song—
‘ He loved me, and gave Himself for me.’ ”

The benediction was pronounced by Dr. Oliver. While the coffin was taken from the church the Dead March from “Saul” was played. The funeral procession was headed by the Corporation carriages, followed immediately by a long line of mourners on foot. Next came the hearse, and about forty mourning and private carriages. The coffin bore the inscrip-

tion :—"Fergus Ferguson, M.A., D.D., died 3rd November, 1897, aged seventy-three." The funeral was witnessed by many thousands of people who assembled outside the church, and lined the route to Sighthill Cemetery. A short service, consisting of prayer and the singing of the 2nd Paraphrase, took place at the side of the grave.

Those around the tomb, as they saw the coffin which contained the earthly garment of the devoted servant of Christ disappear, were deeply moved, and for a season lingered round the grave in silence, fearing to speak with one another lest they should desecrate the sacred scene. To all such the very dust of those who ministered to them in holy things is dear, and their memory is a cherished possession.

CHAPTER XXI.

1897.

Memorial sermons—Professor Taylor—Rev. G. Gladstone—Rev. Dr. Adamson—Press tributes—Principal Fairbairn—Congregational Union—Erection and unveiling of monument and tablet—Addresses—The lasting monument—End.

ON the two following Sabbaths memorial services were held in Montrose Street Church, and were largely attended by sympathetic congregations. On Sabbath, the 7th November, the Rev. Professor William Taylor, D.D., officiated, and during the course of his sermon made touching references to the loss sustained by the church by the death of Dr. Ferguson. His text was Philippians iii. 17—"Brethren, be followers together of Me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample." In his introduction he said:—

"By the departure of your pastor, our much loved and honoured brother, our hearts are greatly moved with sorrow and a deep sense of loss. I trust, however, that this sense of loss and sorrow are, in reality, the special forms in which we express our grateful acknowledgments to God for what He gave us all in

your now sainted pastor. Now, as perhaps you never did before, you know and feel what great things God enabled him for more than half a century to be and to do in the midst of you as a church and congregation. During that long life and ministry, with tender and sympathetic heart, he went out and in among you, rejoicing in your joy and sharing your sorrows. From week to week he gave you the rich and varied fruits of his well-cultured, well-stored mind. By clear arguments, by wonderfully copious pictorial illustration and allegory, and with peculiar pathos of soul, he ever sought to make manifest the excellence of the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ."

In the afternoon, the Rev. George Gladstone officiated, taking for his text, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life." Pointing out (1) the saint's work, (2) the time for the work, and (3) the saint's reward, Mr. Gladstone spoke on the character and work of Dr. Ferguson. After dealing with his walk and conversation as becoming the Gospel, the preacher noted specially his gentleness, humility, sensitiveness, and his lovableness. Mr. Gladstone, in closing, spoke of his pastoral work as follows:—"He could often have gone elsewhere, but his heart was rooted in the church of his first love. And so his first church was his last. But no church, as a whole, can know what a faithful pastor does in nurturing the young, in guiding the perplexed, in comforting the sorrowing, in cheering the dying. Day by day he must give as of the very force of his life in loving sympathy and earnest prayer for those in trouble. I

know how welcome a visitor your pastor was in all your homes, and how eagerly you longed for him when the shadows of death had fallen on these homes, and your hearts were sore with sense of loss. His loving heart, overflowing in sympathy, made your load more easily borne, and his earnest pleading brought blessing from above. Blessed be God for sparing him so long, and enabling him to be the comforter of so many, and to lead such numbers to the feet of the Saviour.

On Sabbath, the 14th November, the Rev. Dr. Adamson occupied the pulpit forenoon and afternoon, and at both services made special reference to what Dr. Ferguson was and had done. In the forenoon he took for his subject "The Abolition of Death," and in concluding, said :—

"It is now more than fifty years since I looked on the face of your dearly-beloved and honoured pastor for the first time. He was then a young man of little more than twenty years, and when he appeared in the pulpit I would not have been astonished if an angel had appeared at his side. So gentle, so solemn, so kind, and so earnest was he in his word, act, and general deportment that he impressed my boyish mind that he was one who talked with God and saw the face of his Saviour before he saw the face of man. In those far-off days the power he exercised was wonderful, and the good he was under God enabled to do was great. At his feet the aged saint sat with his venerable locks ; the mothers of Israel, who bore the cares of large families ; the men of business, who carried on

the work of the world ; young men and women were in the congregation by the score ; and boys and girls delighted to hear from his anointed lips the wonderful story of the Cross. This was pre-eminently then, as it has ever been, the burden of his ministry. Your pastor was no ordinary man, and he accomplished a task few men ever accomplished. Though simple, he was profound, and had a remarkable insight into spiritual things."

Sermons were also delivered by the most of the ministers of the former Evangelical Union and some of the leading ministers of the Congregational Union on the life and work of Dr. Ferguson, in all of which it was pointed out that he was a scholar, a preacher, and a saint ; that his ministry was finely rounded and complete ; that he was courteous and refined, fulfilling the ideal of a Christian gentleman ; that his work was in many ways apostolic, and that wherever he went he left the kindest remembrances behind. This was the way his brethren, who knew him better than the outside world could, spoke of him, and they did it out of genuine feelings of sadness for their loss and gladness for his gain.

The secular press uttered its voice as to the value of the life Dr. Ferguson lived in the service of God and of man. The daily newspaper and the weekly journal gave brief accounts of his career and the estimate in which he was held by his contemporaries. A leaderette out of a daily gives the opinion expressed by them all. The writer says :—

"A notable Glasgow clergyman is removed from

our midst by the death of Dr. Fergus Ferguson, of Montrose Street Congregational Church. His figure was familiar on the streets and in all local assemblies gathered together for the furtherance of righteous causes. He was a fine type of citizen, and had the city's best welfare at heart. As a minister he was beloved by a large congregation, and the sermons he preached were always interesting. The topics and events of the day were not forgotten in his discourses. Seriousness was a leading note in his character—seriousness in speech and act and aspect. Yet under his gravity of manner those who knew him, knew a most kindly, genial human being—one who loved his fellow-mortals and yearned to do them good. From his youth he was a teetotaler, and was constant in his advocacy of abstinence—an advocacy which was mild and persuasive and altogether free from the obtrusive vulgarity which is sometimes too common on platforms. In many circles, in spheres where Christian schemes are promulgated, Dr. Ferguson will be greatly missed. It may truly be said of him that he was one of 'the salt of the earth.'"

The widow and family received numerous letters of sympathy from those who had known the departed and from those who had been benefited by his ministry. These came from all parts of the kingdom and abroad, and from persons belonging to all churches and no church. One may be given because of the writer, his estimate of Dr. Ferguson, and the relations he sustained to him. It is from Principal

Fairbairn, D.D., of Mansfield College, Oxford, and is addressed to Mrs. Ferguson. It runs thus :—

“Dear Mrs. Ferguson,—It was with the deepest regret that I saw the news of Dr. Ferguson’s death. It came upon me quite with a shock. I had heard of his journey to Wick, of his illness there, but little expected any such sad result. He has died as he himself would have wished to die, literally in harness, active, dutiful, brave to the last. And he has not died without seeing like Moses the promised land of a higher and restored brotherhood; but more favoured than Moses he saw the land not from Pisgah but was allowed to set his own feet upon it, crossing with the people, and as their leader, the man they both delighted in their first common act to honour.

“Dr. Ferguson lives in my memory as one of the gentlest, kindest, and most delightful men I have known. I first saw him when I came before the examining committee of the old Academy as a candidate for admission, and I remember with gratitude his kind and helpful way in what seemed then a most trying hour. He took us, too, in the session when Dr. Morison was absent from illness, and we discovered there the quiet humour which endeared him to students who were more touched with the severity than the grace of life. Later I saw much of him, and found him ever one of the brotherliest of men. And when his people invited me to be his colleague, one of the things I felt most clearly was that it would have been a pleasure to work with him, and was a real pain to me to decline to do so. And as the

studies which detained me in Bathgate made knowledge of Hindu thought and religion necessary, I owed it to Dr. Ferguson that just at the most critical moment I was introduced to Dr. John Muir, who was perhaps the most helpful friend I ever had.

“Forgive these reminiscences, but they came rushing upon me as I began to think of him we have just lost. And I may add that it seems no small pleasure to remember that my last glimpse of him was last May in Edinburgh as he sat in the chair of the reconstituted Union.

“His labours were abundant and unwearied, and now he rests from them all. Were he able to speak he would use the words of the Master and say, ‘Weep not for me.’ He has entered into ‘the inheritance of the saints in light’; and we who are still without can only hope and pray that we too may be allowed to enter straight, as it were, from the work we love.

“With sincere and cordial sympathy, believe me, ever sincerely yours,

“A. M. FAIRBAIRN.”

Dr. Ferguson held the office of Chairman of the Congregational Union when he died, and at the first meeting of the General Committee after the event, the following resolution was passed, recorded in the minutes, and copies were forwarded to the bereaved family, and to the church which he served throughout the whole of his honourable career:—

“The General Committee of the Union, at their meeting held in Dundas Street Church Hall, Glasgow, on 23rd November, 1897, resolved to put on record

their deep sense of the loss which they and the whole denomination have sustained through the lamented decease of Dr. Fergus Ferguson. As the first president of the united body, and the ever-ready helper of our churches, he commanded the confidence, esteem, and warm affection of all his brethren. His peculiar personal relation to the two bodies, now so happily united, his many varied gifts, his long-continued services of over fifty years so devotedly rendered, by voice and pen, to the cause of Christ, marked him out as one prominently fitted to bind us still more closely together in the spirit of our common Christian brotherhood. We deeply lament our loss, which is his gain, yet his memory will ever remain amongst us as one of our most cherished possessions.

“We beg most respectfully to offer our heartfelt sympathy to his family and church in their sore bereavement, and to commend them to the grace and love of Him who ever liveth to be the helper and comforter of all His people.”

The office-bearers and members of the church and congregation of Montrose Street Church resolved to erect a handsome monument over the grave of their sainted pastor in Sighthill Cemetery and a bronze tablet in the church. The unveiling of these tributes to his memory took place on Saturday afternoon, the 11th March, 1899, before a large gathering of members of the church, and friends from sister churches in the city and neighbourhood. The Rev.

Charles Richardson, M.A., successor to Dr. Ferguson, presided at both services and conducted devotional exercises.

Rev. Wm. Arnott, Dennistoun Church, performed the ceremony of unveiling the monument, and paid a tribute to the memory of his revered friend. He said that they were met that day on hallowed ground, and hallowed memories crowded in upon them. Dr. Ferguson decided for Jesus in early life, joining the church when he was fourteen years of age. With holy ambition he gave himself to study, and made everything subservient to his being thoroughly furnished for the service of the Master. He commenced his pastoral work when he was a very young man. He greatly loved his people. Nothing could separate him from them, and so he remained their spiritual teacher and guide to the last. As scholar, as preacher, as pastor, as saint—Dr. Ferguson was no ordinary man. It was no small element in Dr. Ferguson's reward that he enjoyed so much of the fruit of his labours and the realization of so many of his hopes.

The monument bears the following inscription :—

“Erected by his congregation in memory of the

REV. FERGUS FERGUSON, D.D.,

first minister of Montrose Street Evangelical Union Congregational Church, Professor in the E.U. Hall, born 1824, died 1897, held his charge 54 years. Gentle in his disposition, eager for the good of others, always bringing a charm of cheerfulness into his

circle with his sympathy and sweet humour: in every one who knew him he found and retained a friend. By his devoted labours, his religious writings, an eloquence fascinating in its fervency and originality, and a life beautiful in its simplicity and noble in its integrity, he proved himself one of the most powerful of heaven's ambassadors in constraining men to love God and one another."

At the close of the service in the cemetery the company repaired to the church in Montrose Street, where a greatly increased congregation assembled. After devotional exercises, the Rev. James Ross leading in prayer, Rev. George Gladstone delivered the eulogium upon Dr. Ferguson and unveiled the tablet.

Mr. Gladstone said the name of Dr. Fergus Ferguson, in honour of whose blessed memory they gathered, was widely known, and wherever known it stood for what was lovable and praiseworthy. Greatly loving, he was greatly loved; and ready to appreciate goodness in others, many saw in riper fulness in himself the graces that pleased him in them. If he had a fault, perhaps it was that he was too eagerly anxious to please others. A tender, loving, sensitive soul, it was his desire to stand well with others. And hence the ostracism which connection with the Evangelical Union in its early days involved meant more to him than it did to many others. He winced under misunderstanding, and never in the times of fiercest controversy could he do anything else than desire to live at peace with all.

Short of what was right he would gladly do anything to live in that peace. His fellowship was a tonic to the soul. The happy remark, the racy anecdote, the recital of what God had done, the repetition of the promises that are yea and amen in Christ Jesus, the discourses in which Christ crucified was exalted, the prayers that breathed a perfect trust and deep love—by these as well as by his writings and other works he refreshed and succoured many.

The tablet was then unveiled and an impressive service brought to a close.

The hymns provided for both ceremonies were select and suitable, including Dr. Ferguson's own well-known hymn, "He loved me and gave Himself for me." The choir of the church (Mr. Herbert, conductor) led the praise.

The bronze tablet was designed by Mr. W. J. Tonner, sculptor, who was brought up under the ministry of Professor Ferguson. The tablet is bold and graceful in design, and bears the following inscription :—

"By the beauty of his life, and the power and charm of his preaching, he proved himself one of the noblest and best beloved of the ambassadors of God."

Both inscriptions were composed by the Rev. William Dunlop, South-Side E.U. Congregational Church, Glasgow.

These monuments express a part of the feelings which filled the hearts of those who aided in their erection, but they are not the most enduring which will tell of Dr. Ferguson's life work as a preacher

of the Gospel, the pastor of his people, the social and temperance reformer, the saintly man, the faithful husband and loving father. The monuments which speak of these things are in unseen regions of the soul which death will not destroy, and over which time has no power. They last for ever, and bear witness that the life, words, acts, and influence of Fergus Ferguson were not in vain, but by the divine blessing fraught with unspeakable good to his fellows and glory to the triune Jehovah.

APPENDIX.

REV. DR. FERGUSON AS PROFESSOR.

BY REV. M. R. KIRKPATRICK.

It was with intense delight that students, whose curriculum at the Hall remained unfinished at the end of Session 1891, heard of the appointment, by Conference, of Dr. Ferguson to the Chair of New Testament Exegesis.

For well-nigh half a century the duties of the Chair had been discharged by the late revered Principal James Morison, D.D., beyond all praise, but during his latter years he had only been able to perform a part of the professorial work. The Conference was unwilling to allow the Principal to retire altogether, and for several sessions called upon Dr. Ferguson to assist in the work. That service, ungrudgingly given, did not fail to impress the students, so that when the time came to perform the unpleasant task of appointing a professor to succeed the Principal in the New Testament Chair, there was only one name on the lips of members of the Conference—Dr. Fergus Ferguson. It was universally felt throughout the denomination that his rare intellectual endowments, combined with a genial manner, deep humility, and high spirituality of life, could not but make the work of the new Professor a real force in the denomination.

During the ten months that intervened between his appointment to the Chair and the commencement of his duties, Dr. Ferguson threw himself heartily into theological study. More than ever did he seek to understand the vital questions that were then rending the theological air, and when he made his appearance at the beginning of August, 1892, it was evident that his mind was in touch with current problems, and that his lectures would be fresh and up to date. Nor is it saying too much that his first appearance in the new capacity surpassed the best expectations of his friends.

It had always been the custom in the Evangelical Union Theological Hall to inaugurate each session by a public meeting

in North Dundas Street Church, at which each Professor in turn delivered a lecture upon some important theological topic. At the beginning of Session 1892 Dr. Ferguson made his *début* as Professor of New Testament Exegesis, and at the opening meeting delivered a remarkable lecture on the "Authorship and Canonicity of the Epistle to the Hebrews." It was a notable meeting. Principal Morison, D.D., presided, and introduced the new Professor to the students. Dr. Talmage, of Brooklyn Tabernacle, occupied a seat on the platform, and after the lecture made a few felicitous remarks. Dr. Ferguson was received with heartiest goodwill as he rose to deliver his lecture. He proceeded to review the various theories which had been advanced to account for the authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and in a masterly fashion showed how futile were the repeated attempts to find the author, remarking appropriately in the words of Origen, "Who wrote this Epistle? God alone certainly knows." In his attempt to show that the divine truth rests not upon the name of any author but upon its intrinsic worth, he showed himself no conservative in criticism, but one in whom the best theological movement of his time found warm sympathy.

It must not, however, be supposed that either in his introductory lecture or in his subsequent teaching, he showed signs of extravagance. Far from it, his was a cautious, reverent, sober, and honest mind that would not leap to conclusions, but which would not hesitate to accept any new position when the old was found to be untenable.

When the classes opened on the day succeeding his inaugural lecture, it was found that what had been said on that occasion was meant as an introduction to the studies of the session. The portion selected for exegetical work was the first four chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The line of thought he followed cannot be said to have been original, yet the truth was unfolded with a freshness that arrested the minds of his students and gave to the passages considered the beauty of a new setting. Nor was the part selected from the Epistle the least likely to lend itself to his glowing imagination. It was inspiring day after day during August and September to hear the ministry of Jesus con-

trasted, first with the Angels who revealed the first Covenant, and then with Moses, head of the house of God under that Covenant, and again with the priests of the Aaronic order, until the superiority of Jesus, Redeemer and Priest, stood out with surpassing brilliance.

It was then, too, that the highest devotion of the students was evoked when, as they felt the nearness of the Master they seemed to hear Him speaking to their souls through the voice that was quivering with emotion, and laid down their pens and seemed to behold the Glorified. If it was greatness in Christ to bring men near to God, it was greatness in Dr. Ferguson to bring men near to Christ.

The lectures on the Hebrews were continued during the session of 1893 with the same satisfactory results. At this stage, however, the character of the lectures was somewhat changed. This was accounted for by the fact that, in the succeeding chapters of the Epistle, the problems presented were of a different nature to those which were considered in the earlier part of the book. When the Professor came to consider the relations of Jesus to Melchisedec, he seemed to enter a new region, and as he passed to the development of Christ, through suffering, and then on to the difficulty of restoring the Apostate, he seemed to feel that he was face to face with solemn problems which pathos and rhetoric could do nothing to solve. One by one difficulties were overcome, and at length all felt as if the light that shone from the throne had penetrated the problems of the fifth and sixth chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

During the session of 1894 Dr. Ferguson forsook the Hebrews for the Gospel of St. John, which, he said, had always a strong fascination for him. He selected parts of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters of that Gospel for exposition ; but it can hardly be said that his performances during his third year as Professor were equal to those of the two former sessions. No doubt there was sufficient scope for his devotional feeling and exegetical ability in the valedictory discourses of the Lord, but somehow the work seemed to drag. It was felt that the exacting nature of his congregational work had not left him either the

time or the strength to make adequate preparation for the work of the Hall session.

Dr. Ferguson frequently expressed a deep regret that there was little opportunity in the Hall for the study of apologetics, and felt himself called upon to combine with his exegetical work a portion of that vast subject. This he did by selecting an important subject and devoting every Tuesday during the session to its study. In the session of 1892 he took up the "Canon of the New Testament," which he discussed very fully, showing no little acquaintance with the writings of the early fathers. In 1893 the Tuesday lectures were devoted to "Inspiration and Revelation." These lectures provoked great interest and discussion. The appearance of several interesting works on the subject in the earlier part of the year had made the students eager to know how the Professor would deal with certain of its phases. His view was by no means generally accepted by the students, who, it is feared, must have become somewhat troublesome by the extravagant use of the privilege of "Socratic" instruction. For it must be explained the Professor had faith in this method, and gave every encouragement to the students to express their difficulties and to ask on points that were not quite clear.

In 1894 the Professor gave a review of the Johannine problem, which partook more of the nature of a review of criticism than of criticism itself, the teacher relying more upon the devout testimonies of such men as Ebrard and Godet—the former of whose words, as quoted by the Professor, indicate his own feeling on the subject—"Till figs grow upon thistles, the genuineness of the Gospel of John will continue firm and impregnable in the estimation of all who do not rank with the thistles themselves."

It might be imagined from the genial nature of the Professor that the work of his class would be easier than that of a more stern teacher, but that is a mistake. Weekly exercises were prescribed upon questions discussed in the class, which usually demanded a great deal of independent reading and study if the productions were to attain to the first class. These essays in-

volved not only a considerable drain upon the students' midnight oil, but also upon the time of the Professor, who went over every exercise with amazing care.

But the students' relations with the Professor were not confined to the class-room. He was on the best terms with all, and loved to invite them every session to enjoy hospitality at his home. It was a treat to the students, and judging from the light-heartedness of the Doctor and his worthy helpmeet, it was also a treat to them. Everything that could be done to make the enjoyment complete was done on this occasion. The Doctor renewed his youth, forgot his cares, talked with characteristic humour, and even sang some of his old songs which had done good service in the early days of the temperance movement. All too soon the nights passed by, but the memory of these happy evenings must remain with the students until they join their Professor and friend to drink the new wine in the Kingdom of God.

At last it was found necessary for the Doctor to resign his professorship. It was a great grief to the students, for they loved him, and if it could not be said that he was an intellectual giant, he was, what in our colleges is not less important, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost. He had the power to influence students. The two great characteristics which belonged to him as a teacher were, first, a fine faculty for homiletics, for applying truth in a practical way. And second, he was a great spiritual force. His life influenced his students. He helped them not only to intellectual power, but also to the life of God. It has been said of Robertson of Brighton that a tempted tradesman often found in the portrait of the great preacher a moral power that enabled him to serve Christ, and no less can be said of Dr. Ferguson. Often have his students in the midst of their temptations recalled the image of this "man of God" and found through it grace to become followers of him even as he was of Christ. Can any higher word be said of him than this, that he not only taught students the mystery of the Kingdom of God, but that he made men, and *that* by the power of his own personal goodness?

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF DR. FERGUSON'S WRITINGS.

- "The Triumph of the Simple Gospel as illustrated by the Useful Life and Joyful Death of Miss Mary Simpson." Pp. 124. - 1846
- "A Treatise on Peace with God: designed for the Use of Inquirers." Passed through several editions. Pp. 208. - - - 1852
- "Bible Election Letters on the Principal Points of the Calvinistic Controversy." Pp. 180. - - - - 1854
- "Holiness; or, What we should be and do." Pp. 238. - - - 1860
- "Passing Events Improved." Pp. 270. - - - - 1862
- "Sacred Scenes; or, Notes of Travel in Egypt and the Holy Land." Pp. 400. - - - - - 1864
- "Sacred and Continental Scenes." Pp. 408 - - - - 1866
- "Things New and Old." Pp. 216. - - - - 1868
- "Wanderings in France and Switzerland." Pp. 230. - - - 1869
- "The Parable of the Prodigal Son: A Homiletic Exposition." Pp. 191. - - - - - 1873
- "Not Found Wanting: A Temperance Tale." Pp. 147. - - - 1874
- "A History of the Evangelical Union." Pp. 380. - - - 1876
- "A Popular Life of Christ." Pp. 546. - - - - 1878
- "From Glasgow to Missouri and Back." - - - - 1878
- "The Book of Family and Private Devotion." Edited. - - - 1880
- "The Moral Character of God." Pp. 192. - - - - 1881
- "The Patriarchs: their Lives and Lessons." Pp. 462. - - - 1882
- "The Life of Rev. Fergus Ferguson, Sen.," in *Evangelical Union Worthies*. - - - - 1883
- "The Sick Chamber: a Book for the Sick and Suffering." Pp. 224. 1885
- Dr. Ferguson edited the *Evangelical Repository* from 1869 till 1886, and contributed largely to its pages.
- He contributed a series of articles to a monthly (*Forward*) on "Home Scenes."
- In *The Guide*, a monthly magazine for young men, Dr. Ferguson contributed fifty-five articles on "Men I Have Heard."
- He was also a regular contributor to the *Christian News* from its beginning in 1846. He also sent contributions to the *Cumberland Presbyterian*, a weekly paper published in Nashville, Mo., U.S.A.

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